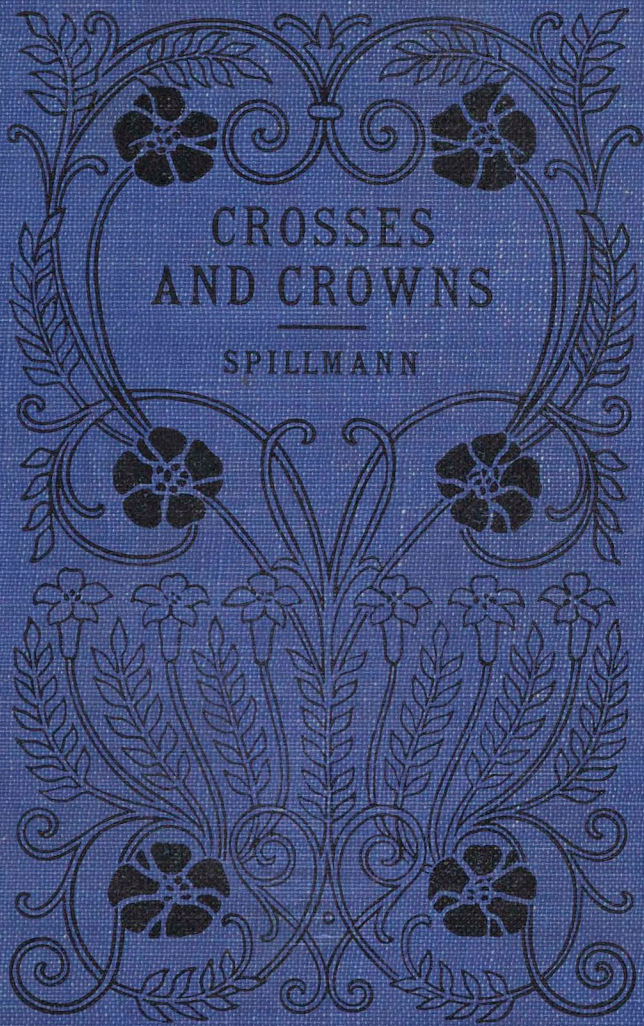
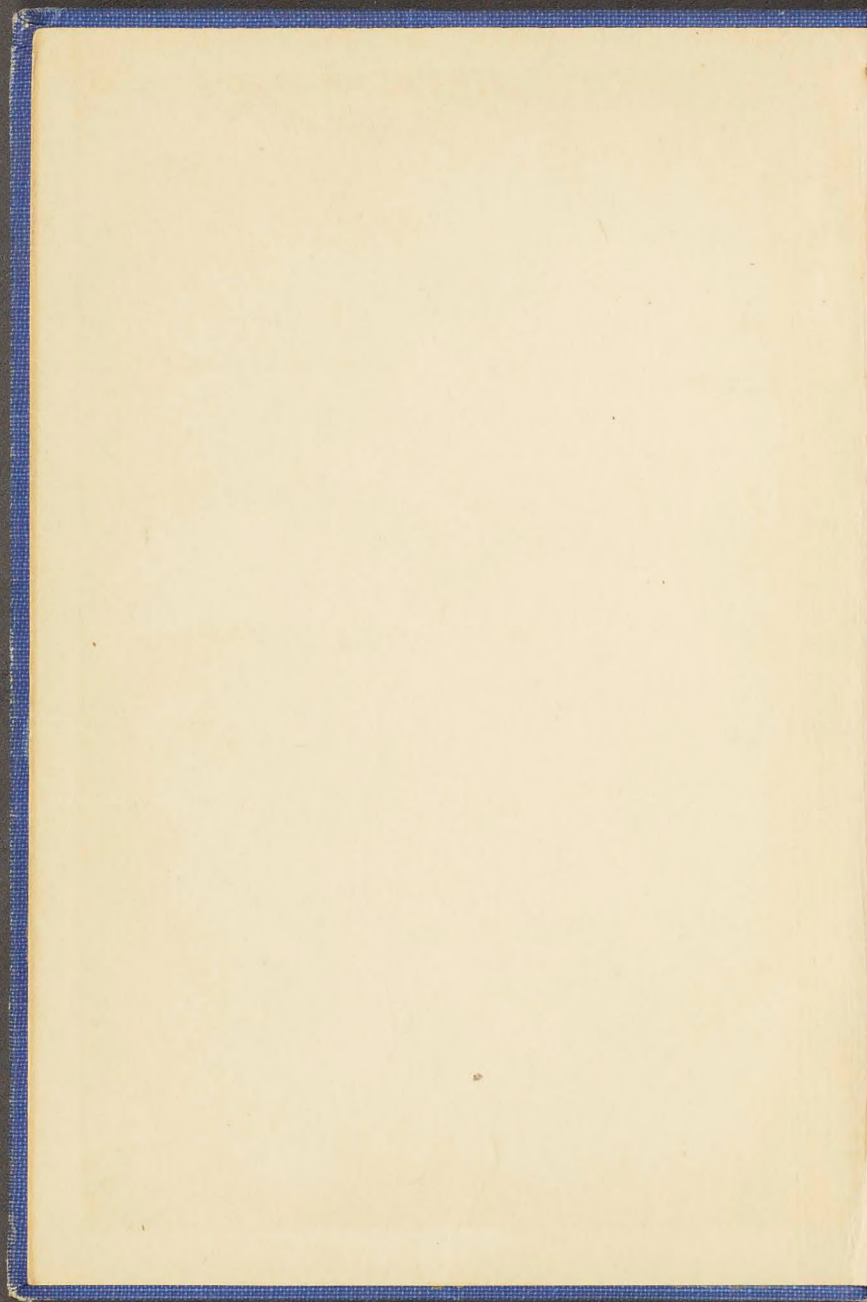




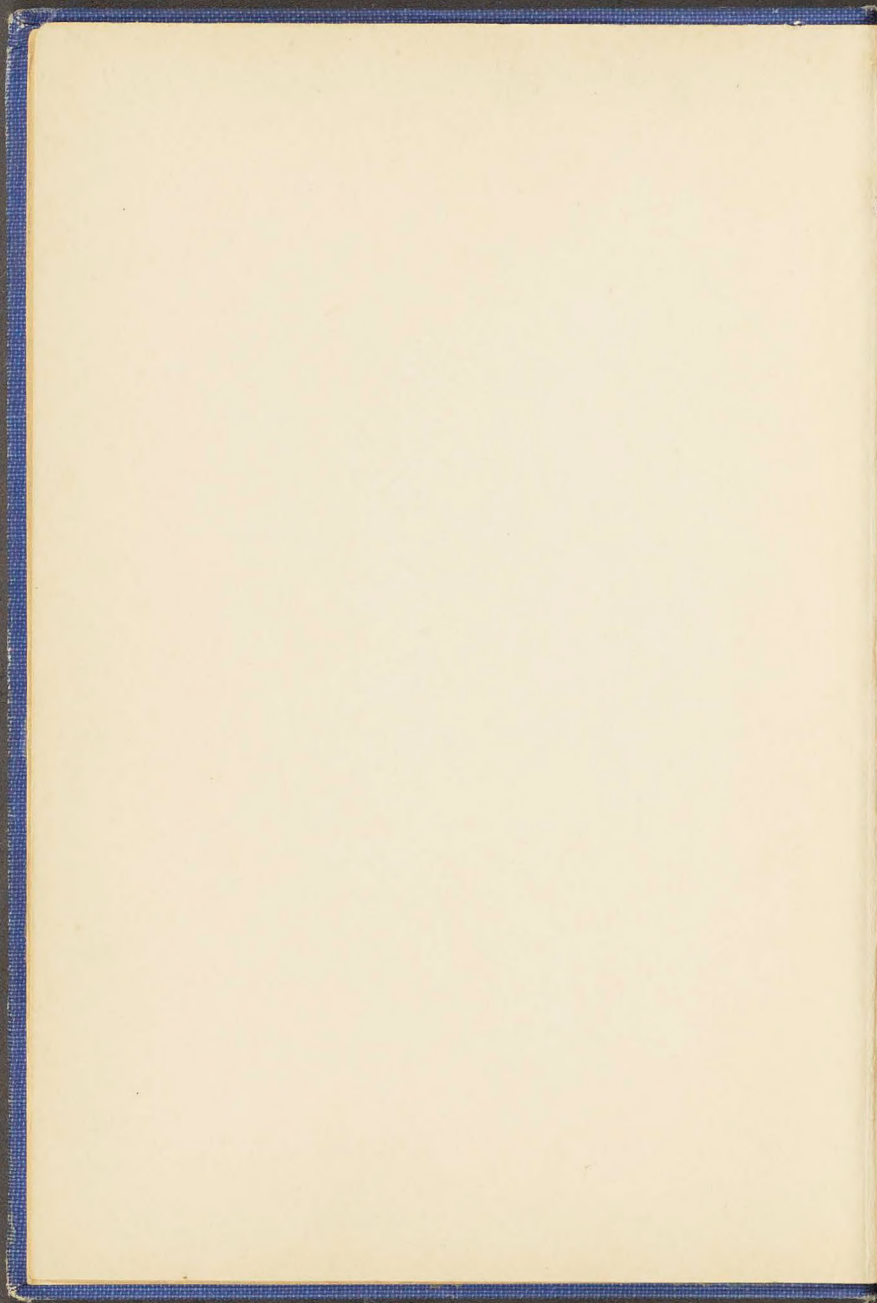
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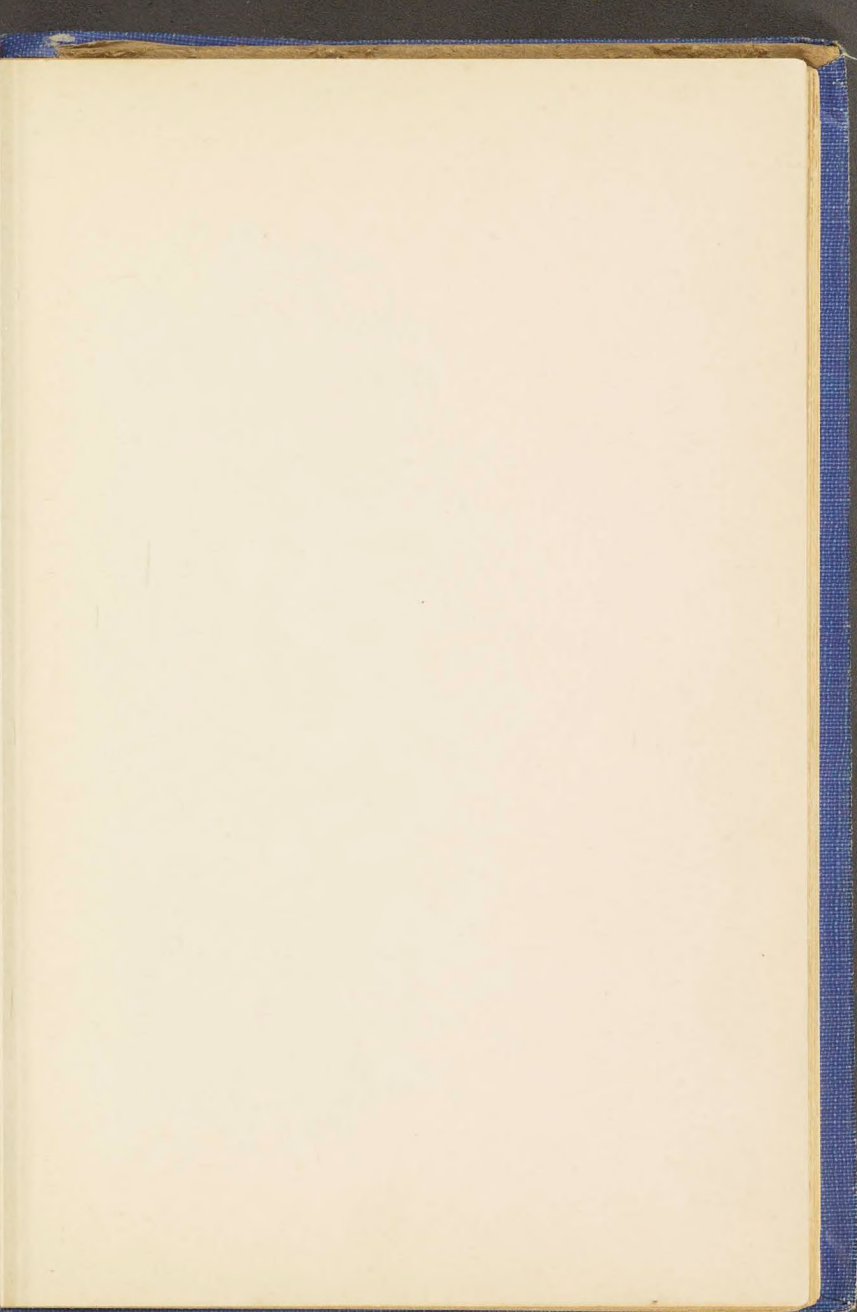


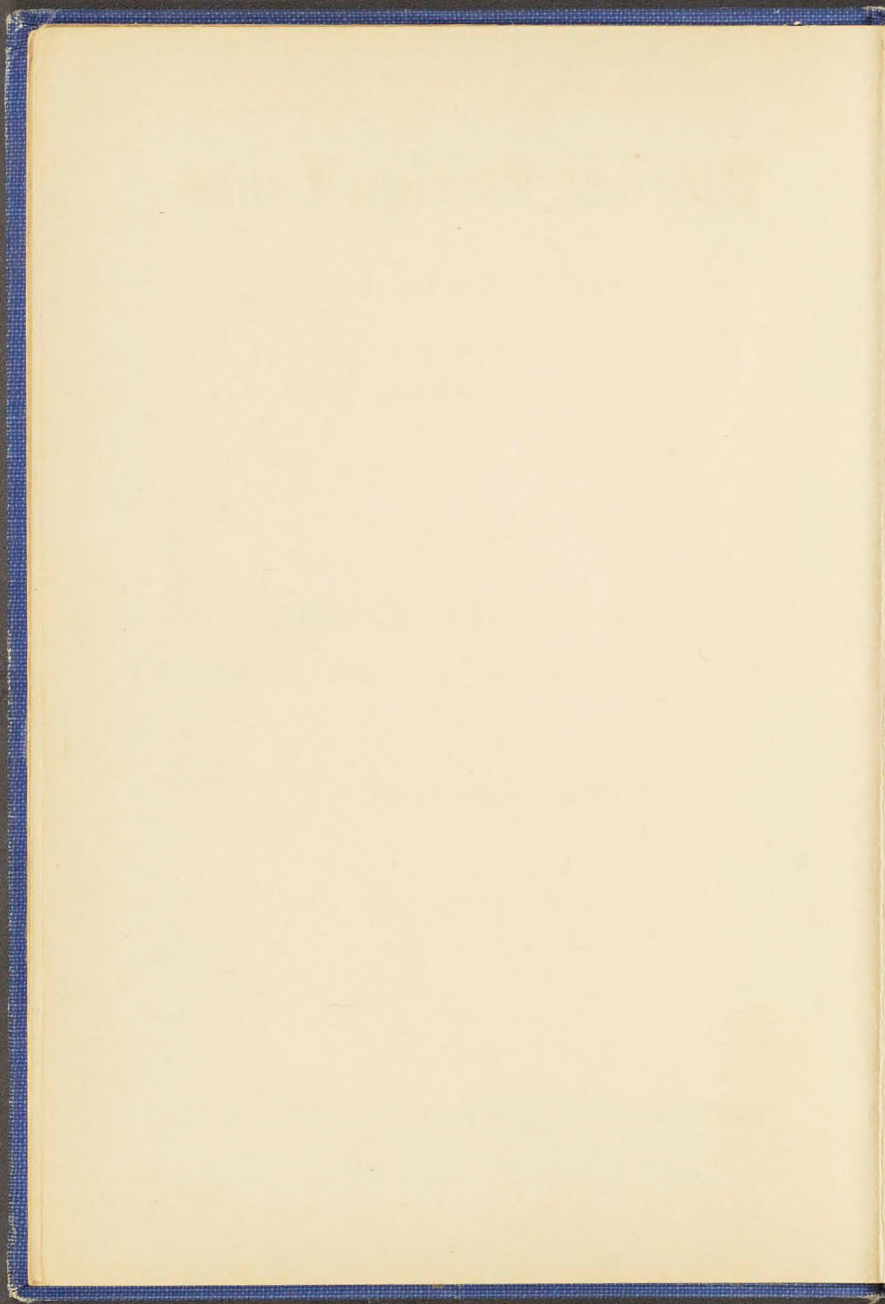
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Tales of Foreign Lands

A Series of Stories for the Young

Collected by

Rev. Joseph Spillmann, S. J.

VOL. IX

Crosses and Crowns

From the Supplement of "The Catholic Missions"

Translated by

Mary Richards Gray

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SOCIETY OF THE DIVINE WORD

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To
ANN ELIZA SMYTHE OF CHICAGO
*the translator dedicates her part of
this little volume.*

CROSSES AND CROWNS.

CHAPTER I.

The Death of One of the Persecutors of Christians.

My little friends, of course, you know where Farther India is. Along the whole of its eastern coast, which is washed by the South China Sea, stretches the Kingdom of Annam, a broad, fertile shore plain extending back to foothills and mountains covered with an exuberant growth of tropical vegetation. Annam comprises about one-fifth as much territory as the German Empire, and is about one-half as densely populated. Of the inhabitants a half million are Catholics. Missionaries and Christians banished from Japan brought to this coast the first knowledge of our belief, and in the storm of bloody persecution, lasting down through our own time, the grains of mustard seed, which shall one day flourish as great trees, were here sown. In a time of persecution—

in fact only about twenty years ago—the incidents which I shall relate took place. The scene is the royal fortress of Hue, the capital of Annam.

Hue, Pho-tua-tien, in the language of the Annamites, with its houses of bamboo and palm leaves and its four hundred pagodas, lies almost in the middle of the curving coast line, and at some little distance inland. It is an open city on the River Hue, which with many broad bendings winds through fruitful plains. On the one street facing the river much business is done, and here rises a mighty fortress within a fortress, the outer walls of which are five miles around. In form it is square. Broad moats encircle it; massive brick towers rise at its corners and middle entrance; cannons protected with roofs frown from its ramparts. The outer fortress which contains barracks, store-houses, the residences of the lower mandarins, quarters for the troops, stalls for the elephants, and so forth, is built around an inner citadel, which is in turn surrounded with moats and high walls. Within these second walls stand the palace, the houses of the high mandarins and the

great pagodas in the midst of wonderfully beautiful, park-like grounds, laid out with avenues lined with tall palms, broad-leaved banana and banyan trees, canals of varying sizes, artificial ponds, and exquisite gardens. Here all the skill of the landscape gardener has been called into play to arrange bridges, grottoes, waterfalls, and broad stretches of velvety lawn in such a way as to give beautiful vistas. Wander where you will through the long avenues or on the winding canals, you get a glimpse of the great palace which dominates the scene, a low building constructed in Chinese style, with many spreading wings and gilded roofs rising one above another. So luxuriant is the foliage of this park, so fairy-like its gardens with their wealth of brilliant colored flowers, that it is hard to fancy one's self within the confines of a fortress; rather one feels that here is a solitude created only for pleasure and rest.

On the twentieth of July, 1883, the day on which our story begins, a scene of horror took place within the beautiful palace. The Emperor Tue-Dueck, the terrible persecutor of Christians, who for thirty-five years had

waged war with fire and sword against those who carried the message of the Christian belief, lay dying.

On the broad terrace before the wing in which were his apartments stood groups of the high and low mandarins, the officers of the palace guard, soldiers and servants, and in their faces one could read alarm and terror. A richly gilded sedan chair was brought to the foot of the steps, and quickly a young man dressed from head to foot in most elaborately embroidered silk garments stepped out.

"Dueck - Dueck!" "The Emperor's nephew!" "The heir to the throne!" whispered the different groups of men, and immediately three high mandarins, stationed directly before the palace door, ran down the steps to greet him. So great was the stillness that one could hear the rustling of the Prince's garments, as all the retainers bowed themselves so low that the bands stiff with golden embroidery, standing out from their caps, flapped and fluttered as they made obeisance to the heir-apparent.

"How is my honored uncle? Is there really no longer any hope?" asked the Prince.

"The bright and shining light of Annam is flickering out," said the middle one of the three officials.

"The star of our people is setting," added the second.

"The spirit of the 'virtuous past' is going to his ancestors and will rule us henceforth from his pagoda," put in the third.

"Have they sent for the masters of the healing art at the cloister of the priests at Kwang-tri?"

"Yes, and since yesterday the priests have been at the bedside of the sick Emperor, but their art is powerless."

"And have they had prayers and offerings to the protecting spirits who guard over the Emperor?"

"Not only in the pagodas of the royal fortress but also in the four hundred temples of the city great clouds of incense are rising to the gods of Annam, the ancestors of the Emperor, Buddha, Confucius, and the foreign gods of India and China. Only in the churches of the persecuted Christians are there prayers for the death of our great Tue-Deuck."

"Ha, by the spirits of our house, they

have reason to pray for his death! The smoke of burning Christian villages and temples has a sweeter fragrance than that of all the incense in the world; and by this heart of mine I swear that the blood and smoke of these currish traitors shall rise like a cloud over Annam as soon as I come to the throne. In the meantime have a care that the body-guard keeps a watchful eye on my cousins, especially on Hiep-Hoa, who secretly is on terms with 'the devils of the West'; and when the spirit has left my honored uncle's body, as soon as custom permits, assemble to swear allegiance to me. I shall know how to reward all good and faithful servants."

With these words the Prince went up the steps of the terrace, followed by the three mandarins. Walking across the wide porch they turned to the right and hurried between a row of splendid pillars. Servants and court officials stepped aside respectfully. At the so-called Red Door where stood a double guard of Annamites, bare-footed, dressed in costly silks and decked out with peculiar helmet-like hoods on their heads, one of the soldiers told them that he had

strict orders to allow no one to enter the room of the dying Emperor, as the physicians wished only the marshal and the two pages to be with the sick man. Therefore the mandarins went into an ante-room, but on his own responsibility the Prince walked through the Red Door. Scarcely had he closed it behind him when a hoarse voice cried from the depths of the darkened room:

“Who comes there? Help! Where are the guards? Some one wants to murder me!”

“It is I, uncle,” very quietly responded the Prince, going towards the bed.

“Back, back! Not a step nearer! You want my throne, but I say I won’t die. Do you hear me? I won’t die. When has the mighty Tue-Dueck ever had a wish that was not granted? I won’t die. I say I won’t die. Ha! and do you dare to come nearer?”

In a rage the Emperor raised himself, seized a costly cut glass goblet which stood on a low stand, and threw it at the Prince’s head. Then he cried to the pages crouching on either side of his bed to fan away the awful heat of the fever which consumed him:

"Up! Seize my dagger—he has poisoned me—and run it through his body. I'll give you gold and diamonds; I trust you, because you are too young to want a throne. All the rest of you leave the room.—leave the room."

"Draw back", said one of the physicians to the Prince who was wiping the blood from his forehead. "Another such an outburst as this and his strength will be wholly spent. What a shame to lose the contents of that glass. I not only spent much money in getting the ingredients, but also sleepless nights in preparing that medicine,—and now it is gone."

He then mixed some other sort of drink, which he offered to the sick man. He refused it, and picking up a valuable Japanese vase which was on a table near by, threw it at him, just missing his temples.

"Away, away!" he cried in his delirium, "you are all banded together and traitors—traitors every one of you. Your accursed drinks have made me worse. Away with you, or I'll choke you all single-handed. I'll have no one here with me except the two pages."

In terror the men withdrew to an adjoining room, and the Emperor sank back on his pillow exhausted, then rose and pulled over himself a tiger skin, the present of an Indian Rajah, and tried to quiet the frantic beating of his heart. For a few moments only the ticking of a clock of foreign make broke the silence. Its noise aroused the Emperor, for it told with its measured beats of the hours that were passing all too quickly, and suggested that his were numbered. He ordered it removed. Now all was still. The boys who kept the fans moving, scarcely dared breathe. The Emperor spoke again. With an awful curse, he threw aside the tiger skin and called out:

“I won’t lie here in darkness. Open the windows and let in the light and air.”

Quickly the boys drew aside the heavy curtains and pulled up the shades. The private gardens, the terrace, the flowers, the beautiful sheet of water with little rocky islets covered with vines, the tall trees and shrubs, the twittering of birds, the sunshine and the fragrance of many flowers did not rouse the sick man.

To the boys the light which penetrated

the room revealed his features plainly.— Cold sweat stood on his brow in thick drops; his thin, yellowish-white hair stuck to his forehead in strings; his half-blind, blood-shot eyes wandered in awful anxiety; his toothless mouth was drawn with pain, and on his ashy face was a crazed expression. The two, who had never before seen any one die, were frightened by the sight.

“He is dying,” whispered one lad to the other.

“I’ll choke you, if you say that again,” stormed Tue-Deuck, turning his eyes upon the page who had whispered, while the boy shook with fear.

“I won’t die—do you hear that? Pull down the shades; the strong light gives me a pain in my eyes. Light the lamp; I don’t want to lie here in the dark, I tell you.”

Quickly the page drew down the shutters and lighted the lamp, a great candelabra in the form of a lantern, resting on a golden standard and reaching about as high as a man’s head. Now there appeared in the flickering red light bizarre figures, shadows on the furniture, screens and hangings, and the terrible form of a dragon with flaming eyes, which moved about uncannily.

"Look, look," cried he, "how he stares at me with those burning eyes. Now he flaps his tail, spreads his wings, and stretches out his great paws, as if he would fly at my throat. Have I not offered you sufficient blood of Christians? Streams of it have flowed, and are you not satisfied yet? Spare me; let me live for a year at least, and I will sacrifice you ten thousand, yes one hundred thousand Christians. Not a Christian, not a Frenchman shall breathe in Annam. Rather than let them live will I sell the Kingdom to China, give it over to the followers of the Black Flag. Spare me; help me!"

The dragon's eyes continued to glitter. The boys who could not understand this outburst of anguish believed that the man saw a real demon, from which he was trying to escape, and trembled like aspen leaves.

"Thuan", whispered one, "let me call the Prince and the others, even if it costs my neck. I do not wish to remain here alone any longer. The dragon will get him; it is the terrible spirit of which there are pictures in all our pagodas."

"He cannot do anything to me," answered his companion in a whisper, pale with fear, yet managing to keep control of himself. "You see, dear Lhu, I carry on my breast the crucifix of which I have been telling you, and the image of the Blessed Virgin, whose feet trample on the head of the dragon. My mother this very morning hung round my neck a little box having in it relics of the holy martyr Diaz."

"Diaz!" shrieked Tue-Dueck, whose ear caught the name of the pious Dominican bishop who was barbarously executed on the twentieth of July, 1857. "Diaz", he repeated, staring with a vacant look at the image of the dragon before him. "What do you hiss that name at me for? His head came off because you wished it, and long ago. Thousands of heads have rolled off since, and all for you, and to defend this kingdom from the foreign God whose sign is the cross. It is now—let me see what day it is.—By all the spirits of all the great dragons, it is the anniversary of that execution. Twenty-six years have passed since he closed his accursed eyes, those eyes which have followed me so often since that

time. Ha, ha! I see them again. There, there! There stands Diaz. Don't you see him? Over there in the corner near my writing-table; he is just boring holes through me with those piercing, burning eyes of his. Near him is another—there! Oh, I know you, you were a follower of his, and I had you beaten until your body was in welts, and then hacked to pieces. Do you want to tear the veins out of my body? Don't you see them? Over and near them are bloody forms that press about in an ever narrowing circle, and in front of them all is that pert boy whom I tortured with pinchers, who answered when I asked him if he feared death: 'What, believe in eternal life and not be willing to look death in the face at least once?' No, no, I will not die. Help! Air! There is the dragon; he is choking me; he has set my heart on fire. It is burning within me. Water—just one drop."

Exhausted the dying man sank back on his pillows. Thuan, the Christian page, had the courage to go to him and wet his lips with water, and to tell him that he knew a way of overpowering the dragon and at-

taining life everlasting through repentance, faith, and the reception of holy baptism. The dazed mind of the Emperor did not comprehend these words, so Thuan took out the crucifix and held it before his eyes, in an effort to make him understand. When he recognized the sign of the hated religion, a fit of rage seized him. With an awful oath he knocked the crucifix from Thuan's hands and clutched his throat. Then his eyes closed; blood streamed from his distorted lips, and he sank back on the bed dead.

CHAPTER II.

Mother and Child.

About five minutes walk from the wing of the palace in which the old Emperor died stands a beautiful house in dainty Chinese style, half buried among the trees and shrubs of the park. Near by are many similar houses, the residences of the High Court officials. To one of these the little page who showed the crucifix to the dying Emperor was carried.

Now it was evening and the small boy lay upon a low bed with his head resting on a bolster. A woman sat beside him, leaning over him with loving solicitude as she bathed his forehead and cheeks with cool wet cloths.

"Poor Frank, how badly you were abused!"

"Oh, not so badly, mother. Only the first two or three lashes gave me such pain that I thought I could not bear it. That was when the leather thongs struck me first

on one cheek and then on the other. But when I remembered how our Lord was scourged, the next blow did not seem so painful and hard to bear; then everything turned black before my eyes, and I felt nothing more until I awakened in your arms. Who brought me here from the palace?"

"Two of old Phue-Lin's servants carried you on a litter and laid you here on the bed. My first thought was that you were dead and that I was alone in the world. Had it been true, I could have comforted myself after I heard why you had been beaten. Frank, my boy, God did not think you worthy of your heavenly crown, as yet, or He would have called you to Him; therefore, in humility and with prayer must we prepare for the new struggles which we shall most assuredly have. The Marshal told me that within two or three days we must leave our house and the fortress, unless I can persuade you to burn incense to the spirit of the departed Emperor. As you well know, I had rather go as a beggar the length and breadth of Annam than do it myself, or have you."

"So had I. Let us flee to An-Ninh,

where the good missionaries have a large Seminary. There you can find refuge with the Sisters, who spend their time ministering to the poor and sick, while I study Latin and take holy orders, so that I can go to my benighted people and spread the Gospel. Mother, I'd rather do that than be a royal page and fan such a terrible man as the Emperor, and then, if all goes well, perhaps after a time become a mandarin for a year or two, and finally die such a death as that was to-day. O mother, that terrible picture will always be before my eyes. Its hopelessness was so awful," and the boy shuddered at the thought of the scene through which he had so recently passed.

"Mother, do you believe that the wicked devil in the form of a dragon really appeared to the Emperor, and that the holy bishop and the Christians whom he persecuted stood around threatening him on his death-bed? His cries are ringing in my ears yet!"

"His conscience tortured him in the hour of death, and it is not impossible that the wicked devil in visible form incited him to frenzy in his despair."

"Terrible!—And must we believe that

when he lost his earthly crown he also lost his heavenly one, and that he is now burning in hell, and will continue to burn there through all eternity?"

"We will not anticipate God's judgment, but rather in all humility cry for His mercy towards us. You must give thanks to Him to-day, for His power, not yours, saved you in your hour of peril. Now tell me what happened just before the Emperor's death?"

"Yes, mother. When I held the crucifix before the Emperor's eyes, hoping that he would take his last opportunity for salvation, he became violent and threw himself upon me in a rage. He surely would have choked me, if his strength had not failed him. When he got his hands clutched around my throat, he gave me such a wild look with his old eyes that I cried, and Lhu screamed with all the power of his lungs. Prince Dueck-Dueck, the Court Marshal, the physicians, the mandarins, and a crowd of people came flying into the room. They were very much shocked when they saw the distorted face of the Emperor, and called out: 'He is dead! He is dead! His spirit has joined the spirits of his ancestors! The

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great 'Tue-Dueck is no more!' Then the priests began their wailing. One of the doctors got the dead man's hands away from my throat, and in so doing found the crucifix which had fallen on the tiger skin. Hardly were his eyes upon it before he raised a cry of murder, seized the Prince by the arm, and pointing with his finger to it called out, 'There is the sorcery which has made all my medicines and exorcism powerless. There is the picture of that hated God who is the deadly enemy of all the guardian spirits of Annam and the exalted royal house. Whoever brought that picture into the palace and into the sacred presence of the Emperor is responsible for his death.' On the speaker's face was an expression of horror, inspired by the sight of this Christian abomination. The priests spoke in similar manner, raging with awful imprecations against the cross and its followers. Finally the Prince commanded silence and asked, 'Who brought here the Christian god?' Indeed, I feared to answer openly to the question, knowing that if I did I would be put to death; but God and the Blessed Virgin, to whom in my heart I prayed, gave

me strength to say, 'That is not the picture of the Christian God, but of the Son of God, who for the sake of the redemption of the world died upon the cross. It belongs to me.'—Thereupon I took it from the tiger's skin on which it lay, and was going to hide it away in my breast pocket, when they knocked it out of my hands and trampled it on the floor. And on my saying that I would rather die than part with it, the Prince called the bailiff to drive me out with thongs. The rest you know. Now, mother, I want you to get me another crucifix."

On hearing this account of the happenings of the afternoon, in which there was not a vestige of self-praise, only childish simplicity and directness, the mother could scarcely keep back the tears. For a time she paced up and down the room in which the twilight had almost settled into darkness; then, on a sudden impulse, knelt beside the bed of her child and kissed his swollen and bloody cheeks, while the hot tears came thick and fast.

"What are you doing, mother? Are you weeping?"

"Yes, tears of joy that God has saved you to suffer in His name. Most assuredly you shall have a crucifix, and a beautiful one. I have one put away which I was waiting to give you on the day on which you receive your first communion, but now you shall have it in remembrance of this your first battle for Our Lord. It once belonged to a boy of our faith who was younger than you are when he gave up his life for his cherished belief."

"Are you going to give me Dominicus Thuan's crucifix? O mother, I do not deserve it."

"I feel differently about that, my son; there is no one who deserves it so much as you. I wish that the dear little martyr in heaven would look down and bless you and me, so that in the storm which has only just begun we shall have strength to stand steadfast, if it is God's will for us to die for the faith."

"Pray God that we may," said Frank. "And now if you want to make me very happy, mother, tell me, as you so often have done, the story of Dominicus Thuan."

Then the mother told a story of the bloody persecutions of 1859. At that time

Dominicus Thuan and an older boy of the same name, who belonged in the same Latin school, were taken before a mandarin at Nam-Dinh, to falsely testify that Peter Vinh, a catechist, was a priest. Upon their refusal to do this they were stretched upon the floor, bound down to four wooden pegs and beaten. Next they were called upon to betray the place of residence of the missionaries. This they also refused to do, whereupon again they were scourged. But as the second beating produced no better results than the first, the mandarin turned his wrath against the smaller boy, thinking he would have less trouble in forcing him to play traitor. The bailiff showed him great pinchers, then tore his flesh with them once, twice, thrice, yes eight times, taking great pieces each time. Dominicus remained true to his friends. After this both boys were thrown into a vile prison, where they languished for a month before receiving their martyrs' crowns. On the day of execution a soldier told Dominicus that he had offended in 'being a student of a foreign religion', meaning, of course, the Christian religion. Both boys rejoiced to die, and at the last, in answer to the question concern-

ing fear of death, Dominicus made the reply which Tue-Dueck quoted this afternoon: 'What? Believe in eternal life and not be willing to look death in the face at least once?'—On the way to the block they took the boys into a restaurant for refreshments; neither of them touched food, having before their eyes the vision of the heavenly wedding feast to which Our Lord was beckoning them. Later, when told to remove their cloaks to receive the death sentence, the younger Dominicus threw his aside with so much courage that all were astonished. Then both were bound, and with a stroke of the executioner's ax received the crown of martyrdom.—

After finishing the story with all its harrowing details, the mother handed to her son the crucifix which had once belonged to the youthful Dominicus.

"My holy brother bought it of the executioner," she said. "Honor it, and may you with God's grace stand as steadfast as did he in the hour of trial."

"Yes, mother," answered the page, kissing the cross, "and may all the holy martyrs of Annam and the Queen of Martyrs implore grace for me to remain steadfast."

CHAPTER III.

A Message.

Night had settled down. Mrs. Thuan had lighted a hanging lamp which gave only a dim light, yet sufficient to show that the apartment was not richly furnished. There were several low tables having on them glass and lacquer vases, several painted and decorated screens with pictures of birds and flowers, several pieces of tapestry of simple pattern, several straw mats on the floor, and the bed on which the boy lay. Everything was in exquisite order. In one particular only did the furnishings here differ from those of the ordinary Annamite house. Instead of the abominable pictures of the Buddhist gods and those of the dragon used by the followers of Confucius, there hung on the wall over the boy's bed a beautiful crucifix, a lovely picture of the Mother of God, and one of St. Francis Xavier, the Apostle of India. Ordinarily a curtain was drawn be-

fore these treasures to hide them from heathen eyes; just now it was fastened back and beneath them was a small lighted lamp. Mrs. Thuan had seated herself at the bedside of her child to bathe his burning brow with cool cloths, and at his request had begun saying the rosary in a subdued tone of voice. Just as she came to the words: "For us He was scourged", she heard a light tap on the door.

"Who can it be?" she remarked, opening the door.

"Lhu!" she cried in joyous surprise, getting a look at the face of the small page, who with her son was present at the death of the Emperor. "You here? You have come to inquire after Frank? That is very kind of you, I am sure. Come in."

"Yes, Mrs. Thuan, I got up out of bed and slipped away across the garden and over the terrace. It's only a few steps and they won't miss me; if they were to catch me, I'd get just such a scourging as Frank got to-day. Shut the door tightly, for I've something important to tell you," he said, entering.

This youthful page may have been one or

two years younger than Frank, who had just completed his twelfth year, but as far as appearances went, the two being of a size, seemed of an age.

"Poor Thuan," he said with intense sympathy in his large dark eyes, "you were terribly beaten. At first I thought, when the blows just rained on you, that you were dead. How you did infuriate them! And"—he added softly—"I almost believe the picture of your God did cause the Emperor's death. The rage into which he flew at the sight of it killed him, and you can thank your lucky stars that you got out of there alive."

"I would willingly have given my life as a sacrifice, dear Lhu. If I had been killed, I would now be in heaven in eternal glory and happiness."

"You have said all that to me before; it is very beautiful and pleases me better than what our priests tell us. We have no God who died to save mankind, and our protecting spirits are not so lovely as your angels. And, too, we have no Mother in Heaven to intercede for us, like your Mother with a golden crown whose picture hangs there

We Annamites have no such friendly being in our religious belief; however, we must take our religion as we find it. The foreign religion is good for foreigners; but the Annamite religion is best for Annamites. As the mandarin of ceremonies said to-day, it would be about as fitting for a Frenchman to be converted to our religion as for an Annamite mandarin of ceremonies to be converted to the belief of the French. This official had a great deal to say after they took you out. According to him, 'All Christians are traitors to their country. They invited into this land the French who a number of years ago seized the Province of Saigon and now want to take the whole of Tonkin. Yes, they openly took sides with the French, and fought against the Emperor, and for these things every Christian in the land deserves the death of a traitor.'—Those present agreed that the Christians must be driven out with fire and sword, that they must be given no peace until every one in Annam had been exterminated. And as for the French—he called them the devils of the West, but I do not call them that—he said to be ready.

Prince Dueck-Dueck swore by the spirit of his uncle, that he would not rest until every Christian in the land had been put to death. Now for these reasons I cannot become a Christian, although I should like to, and honor the Blessed Virgin in heaven far more than the spirit of Tue-Dueck, before whom we must burn incense."

"Mother, the thing of all this which grieves me most is that we should be called traitors to our native land," said Frank. "Did the Christians in Tonkin really take sides with the French and fight against our Emperor?"

"Not against the Emperor, but against the robber bands of the Black Flag and the Chinese, who threaten our independence far more than the French," answered Mrs. Thuan. "But, my children, you do not understand that. The Christian religion commands obedience to legal authority, even when that authority is heathen and tyrannical. Your revered father, Frank, was a zealous Christian, yet a true servant to the Emperor who persecuted the Christians, and fought bravely against the French when they seized the Province of Saigon.

Never did he allow himself to be bribed by the enemies of his country, although many of the heathen mandarins offered him large rewards and promises of leniency towards the followers of his religion. Remember this, my children, 'he who is true to God and his own conscience, is true to his faith, his Prince, and his native land'."

"Dear Lhu," said Frank, "follow the voice of your conscience and become a Christian. I should think the terrible death you saw this afternoon would make you want a religion in which death offers some comfort."

"I do not want to die the way the Emperor did, nor do I care to place my head under the executioner's ax the way the Christians do," replied the page. "That's the death you and your mother will face tomorrow, if, at the funeral of Tue-Dueck, you do not burn incense to his spirit and those of his ancestors. That's what I came to tell you. I heard it from the Prince himself, who is to assume the name of Emperor Phu-Dak. He was talking to the mandarin of ceremonies and warned him to have all the residents within the fortress

take part in the procession, burn incense, and bring offerings. Those who refuse are to be given over to the executioner immediately. I tell you to give you an opportunity to flee."

"You are a good boy, Lhu," said Mrs. Thuan, "and we shall pray to the Blessed Virgin in heaven, whom you love, to number you among her children. In remembrance of Frank and me take this little picture of her. Pray to her for protection, but do not worship the picture in the way the heathens do their pictures. If we die by the executioner's ax, do not mourn our death as sad, but rather as comforting,—the path to eternal glory."

The boy's eyes shone with pleasure as he took the little picture of the Blessed Virgin with the Christ Child, and kissing it fervently put it in his breast pocket.

"This is and always will be my greatest treasure," he said, "and daily before it I shall offer up the prayer you taught me, 'Hail! Mary,'"—and with folded hands the boy finished the Ave.

"May all go well with you, Frank, and with you, Mrs. Thuan. The moon has risen

and it is high time for me to slip back into the house. If you really are put to death and go to heaven, intercede for me with the Blessed Virgin. Beg her to show me her mercy. May all go well with you!" repeated Lhu, as he took his departure.

"God be with you," answered Frank, touching the forehead of his little friend with the crucifix. "Now go in peace."

CHAPTER IV.

Tue-Dueck's Burial.

The following morning the fortress of Hue was all life. At the dawn of day the beating of drums called the entire garrison to arms. In the long passageways and under the miserable old bamboo sheds running the length of the barracks between the inner and outer walls, the soldiers,—though one could hardly dignify the men with this name,—erect of carriage and dressed in smart uniforms, were arranging themselves in line of march. They were more like a motley crew of militia. On their heads they wore a piece of cloth, by no means clean, wound around so as to form a turban, and over that a peculiarly shaped, freshly varnished strawhat. Their tunics were of a woollen material of different colors, in style something like a woman's loose outer coat. These reached to their knees and underneath them were loose baggy trousers which properly should have been white, but were

not. All were barefooted. The sabre, usually worn at the side, was strung on a cord which went diagonally across the back in most remarkable fashion, and the rest of the arming consisted of weapons of all possible kinds, from the newest and most approved guns to old flint-lock muskets, spears, and pikes. Here and there in between the rows of spears and the long barrels of the guns a single broad sunshade told of the presence of an officer, while two great silk umbrellas lent dignity to the high military officials in the front of the ranks.

The sounding of a giant gong in the inner fortress announced that the time for the burial of the body of Tue-Dueck in the great mausoleum which he built had come. The troops began marching through the cumbrous gateway to the royal palace, from which they were to go to the pagoda of Thio-Tris and then on to the mausoleum. The body guard which had watched over the royal corpse formed the escort of honor, while the rest of the troops lined the road down which the procession was to pass. Only a small guard was placed at the outer gate, through which hurried a continuous

crowd of people,—mandarins from the city and surroundings, priests from the different Buddhist cloisters, and princes of the royal house with their retainers.

The river before the fortress was filled with boats of all kinds, from the ordinary simple little ones with roofs of plaited straw to the richly painted and decorated vessels of the high-born world. All sought a landing place near the main gateway.

Already most of the guests of honor had arrived and had either been borne in on litters, or gone on foot to take part in the ceremony of the day, when two boats were seen approaching rapidly. Immediately the eyes of all the bystanders were turned upon them. The one, an elaborately decorated Chinese junk, bore the Chinese flag, a red dragon on a golden yellow background; the other, a long, slender European vessel, carried the tri-color of France.

“A Chinese envoy!” cried the officer of the guard at the gate.

“And one of the devils of the West whom the departed Tue-Dueck tried his best to exterminate,” said a brother officer. “Only see the impudence of that! See how those

devils dodged before the prow of the Chinese junk with that accursed boat of theirs, to get to the pier first. We really ought not to let them land."

"Hm! That might cost us too dearly. It would be only a few days before the French cannons would be here claiming admission, and I know not what answer our guns would make from the walls. I fear we might not be able to send the devils away with bloody skulls. No, brave Vanh, that would not help us in the least. We must make the best of a bad matter and receive the French in the same friendly fashion that we do the Chinese."

"But Phu-Dak, our gifted ruler—"

"Will assume command over this kingdom when he has been sanctioned by the Triendinh. As yet he has not been sanctioned by that body. There is still a possibility that the friendly Hiep-Hoa may ascend the throne."

"Then the Black Flag will wave in earnest; then we shall have civil war, and—"

"Be still, be still, my friend. In such times as these one does not give such free expression to his inmost thoughts. We

would better speak of this matter in private, and in the meantime thank the gods that I am no traitor. Now let me go to receive the ambassadors. Get the castle guard in better order; even now I can see the Frenchman sneering at our brave warriors."

With these words the old officer went down to the landing where the boat had pulled up, and received with low salaams first the French, and then the Chinese envoy. To his surprise he discovered that the latter, clad in Chinese ceremonial costume and wearing great spectacles, was Sipho, the leader of the troops of the Black Flag, in disguise. Exchanging with him a quick sign of recognition, he said: "Sipho, we will speak after a time to the mandarin Chu-Mu."

The two envoys, accompanied by a guard of honor, were led into the inner fortress. At the great ceremonial gate the mandarin Ngo-Mon was in waiting, and as soon as the greetings were over, turned the French envoy over to Father Hoang and took charge of the alleged Chinese ambassador himself.

Father Hoang, who is today in Hue, act-

ing as interpreter at the French embassy, is a native Annamite, who was brought up by the missionaries with great care and given a part of his theological training in France. After taking holy orders he returned as a priest to his native land, and, on account of his knowledge of the two languages, his cleverness and devotion to the missions, rendered most important services in the troublous times of which we are telling.

"My mission", said the Frenchman, "is not to pay the last honors to Emperor Tue-Dueck, the news of whose death was told me yesterday on my way here. I come at Admiral Courbet's command to make final arrangements with the government in regard to peace, the terms of which are these: Respect to the Black Flag, separation from China, and an unconditional and full acceptance of the French protectorate."

"At such a time as this, of course, your message cannot be delivered," said Father Hoang. "I believe the Triendinh will make Hiep-Hoa the Good, Emperor instead of Dueck-Dueck, the persecutor, in which case we can probably enforce this treaty of peace; at any rate make a firm stand for it."

"The Christians of Annam will have occasion to thank the French for protecting them with her strong arm," remarked the officer.

"The Christians of Annam have not called upon the French for help; besides, the French have much to do without protecting the Christians here," earnestly responded the priest. "French interference ten years ago almost destroyed the Catholic missions in Tonkin, and I fear that her appearance in Hue will have a like effect. As yet she is not in power, and of two evils we must choose the lesser. On account of the persecutions we shall try through the Triendinh to prevent Dueck-Dueck from coming to the throne and place the crown upon the head of Hiep-Hoa, who promises protection to the Christians. In case the latter is chosen, we may be able to make use of French politics. Help us all you can at the Triendinh by giving expression to our views."

Together officer and priest went to the terrace commanding the wide open space before the Ngo-Mon Gate, from which they could get a good view of the procession, the

head of which was within the palace door. The open square in front of the royal residence, the bank of the pond to one side of this, the bridges connecting with the broad main avenues,—all were lined with troops. So truly beautiful was the scene that the Frenchman could not refrain from exclamations of admiration.

Soon the procession began to wind slowly down the terrace. First came a crowd of servants, dressed in white, the color of mourning, carrying tall staves with gilded knobs. Following them were two bodies of tom-tom bearers with fifty great instruments, escorted by a part of the royal body guard, led by a general on horseback who was accompanied by two attendants on foot, the one carrying a sunshade and the other a sword. These closed into the procession from side avenues. There were two bearers to each tom-tom, and the instrument was fastened by a yoke to the shoulders of these men. In attendance upon them were two others, the one to carry the inevitable sunshade and the other to play. The latter acted more like a madman than a musician, running wildly from one side of the instrument

to the other pounding on it with a great stick. Then came the artillery, and, when the warriors went by dragging cannons mounted on what seemed to be wheelbarrows, the Frenchman could not refrain from smiling. Twenty richly caparisoned war-elephants, bearing the highest military officers of the land, completed the first part of the pageant.

Not less remarkable than this was the second division, headed by a swarm of palace retainers, each one of whom bore in an upright position a thin board painted with red lacquer and having on it great golden letters.

"Those are the titles and virtues of the departed which are written on those boards," explained Father Hoang to his companion. "Thereon are enumerated his deeds, the words of praise which have been spoken of him in his own time and that will be said hereafter. For example, here are the words 'Most just', there 'The wisest of all', 'The meekest', 'The best', 'The well-wisher of his people', 'The conqueror of all the devils',"—

"The 'devils of the West' along with all

the others," put in the officer smiling. "Does it tell anywhere of the numbers of poor Christians, the messengers of the faith, whom he persecuted, and whose villages he burned to the ground?—Oh, what are those frightful things—dragons, snakes, tigers, lions, and so on, painted on paper?"

"Those are pictures of the bad spirits which Tue-Dueck conquered, and those in the farther group are the ones conquered either by his troops or himself."

"How very flattering to us. And is not that a picture of our brave Rivière who on account of the Black Flag was murdered before Nam-Dinh?"

"Sure enough, and what is written underneath tells about that. There is the statement that this robber band worked at the command of the government.—I know how to turn that fact to good account."

"What sort of a thing is that bobbing and rolling along on the shoulders of a dozen or more carriers?"

"It is a ship made of silk and gold paper with masts, sails, and pennants,—the spirit ship, to carry the soul of Tue-Dueck across the river of the under world. The old

Greeks and Romans had a similar idea about the river Styx. Those splendid chests, so beautifully decorated,—some of which go on before, others follow the Emperor's body,—and covered with baldachins, contain incense to be burned before the genealogical tablets of his ancestors in the great pagoda. The highest civil officers of the land act as bearers. Now come the Buddhist priests, the native priests of the protecting spirits, and the different Chinese sects,—all these are allowed to practice their religion openly, for here all religions except the Christian are tolerated."

"France will bring freedom to that religion," said the officer, looking with contempt at the strange crowd of Buddhist priests who were now going by. At their head danced great clumsy bald-headed men in dirty yellow clothes making all sorts of grimaces and wailing lamentations in shrill tones. Musicians with stringed instruments and squeaking flutes followed; then came a number of Buddhist gods, sitting or lying in state, and offerings of fruit and flowers borne on litters. High priests in rich festal robes and a crowd of the worshippers of

Buddha completed this second part of the ceremonial train.

Last and most remarkable of all was the real funeral procession, headed by the Emperor's horse, bridled and saddled but without a rider. After him came the Emperor's elephant, a splendid animal with a golden saddle-cloth, led by the "Mandarin of the Elephant", the title given to the Prime Minister of Annam. In the howdah behind the Emperor's vacant seat squatted two servants, the carriers of the sunshade and the royal flag; then came the tablet of honor, fully five meters in height which caused those carrying it great difficulty to get it out of the palace door in an upright position.

"That is the so-called 'Place of Blessedness'," explained Father Hoang to the foreigner. "The writing describes it. See that long strip of silk under which the women are walking, carrying in their hands mourning flags! Those are the women of the court and that strip of wide silk covers and binds them to the costly carved and gilded chest which they are just now bringing out of the palace door. In

that chest, according to popular belief, rests the soul of Tue-Dueck, and the silk bands lead to the 'Place of Blessedness'."

Lastly came the coffin of the Emperor, a most elaborate affair, covered with gold ornamental work. Preceding it were musicians,—drummers with great tomtoms and pipers making ear-splitting noises,—and just after it walked the princes of the royal house, headed by Dueck-Dueck and attended by a corps of the body guard.

The procession had been fully two hours in passing through the great gate of honor, Ngo-Mon, when Father Hoang asked his companion to close in with the line, saying: "There is a group of Christians. Let us keep near them. Only a part of the body guard is yet to join in and finish up the line."

As they went along, Father Hoang told the officer the story of our little friend, the page, who with his mother was walking just in front of them. At last they reached the splendid pagoda, built as a memorial to Thio-Tri, the father of Tue-Dueck, also a bloody persecutor of Christians.

Down through the middle aisle of this splendid pagoda the real funeral procession made its way. A more magnificent pageant could not well be imagined. Of the decorations of the temple the most remarkable were the glass cases containing great branches of red coral, set with pendant jewels — objects of inestimable beauty and value in the eyes of the Annamites. These were open, and over the beautifully carved traceries of walls, pillars and beams colored lights played. Moving slowly on went the pall-bearers to the genealogical tablet of the family of Tue-Dueck, before which they set down their burden, close to an altar on which the people who had taken part in the procession, advancing through a side aisle, were making sacrificial offerings.

Now came the group of Christians among whom were Thuan and his mother. They wished to pass quietly, but the Master of Ceremonies held them back, and ordered them to burn incense to the sainted spirits of Thio-Tri and Tue-Dueck. This they refused to do, whereupon the official seized Thuan by the arm and tried to take him

away from his mother, crying: "What! You hounds, you traitors, you won't? Make sacrifice this moment, if you value life and limb. Begin, Thuan, or you shall get a dose of the pinchers instead of the thongs."

"I'd rather die than make the sacrifice," said the page in a firm tone of voice.

"The Christians honor and obey your Prince, but they do not pray to the same God that you do," cried Father Hoang, quickly stepping up to the boy's side and putting his hand out over him in a protecting manner.

"Accursed!" muttered the official, and turning to the Prince he said, "It is the interpreter of 'the devils of the West' who takes him under his protection."

"Even though one hundred thousand devils protect him, he and all the rest of the Christians shall make offerings to my uncle and ancestors. They refuse?—Strike them to the ground. Throw them into prison. For this blasphemy at the funeral obsequies of an Emperor they shall be cut into pieces. Out with them, soldiers!" cried Dueck-Dueck. The other princes and the man-

darins tried to control the fury of the heir-apparent, who struck at Father Hoang with his sword and would have killed him, had not one of the officers parried the blow with his dagger. A general tumult ensued; the Christians were seized, bound, and dragged away by the body guard, and the envoy and interpreter would have met the same fate, had not a mandarin taken them into one of the small buildings near the palace until the Triendinh convened. Here from the window they could see the great mausoleum with its tall towers, and watched while the body of the Emperor was carried down the broad steps of the palace and put in its final resting-place.

CHAPTER V.

The Triendinh.

Late in the afternoon, after the funeral was over, the Triendinh, or Court of the Censors, assembled in one of the large halls of the royal palace. At the back of this room stood a stage approached by steps, on which was a glittering throne set with jewels and covered over with a baldachin of rich embroideries and silks. Behind this were hung rare tapestries, and around the sides of the room ran seats. The throne was vacant, yet, as the company came in, each one of the dignitaries made low obeisance to it before taking his place on the low seats to the right or left. The Triendinh consists of ministers of state, lawyers, and learned men, whose duty it is to repudiate or sanction the claimant to the throne approved by the Emperor who has just given it up.

The company being seated, the Prime Minister, who on account of his position

was chairman of the meeting, arose and asked the Master of Ceremonies: "Are all members present? Is there a guard at the door?" On receiving word in the affirmative, he turned to the oldest member of the Triendinh, an expounder of the law, with the next question: "Has the Triendinh been legally called together? Will its decisions be valid?"

The old man raised himself slowly and said: "I see before me the three highest officials of the land, the Mandarin of the Elephant and his two assistants; I see before me the six high mandarins who have charge of ceremonies, archives, the waging of war, monies, justice, and buildings, both on land and water; I see before me my learned brothers of the law who have step by step climbed to the highest round of knowledge. The numbers of the Triendinh are full and regularly assembled. What this body decrees shall have the power of law, and whomsoever it decides shall have the crown, to him and none other shall it belong."

All nodded assent, and the old man sat down.

"The first thing which the exalted Triendinh has to decide is the question of succession. Shall it be in conformity with the desires of the departed Emperor? Shall the nephew Dueck-Dueck ascend the throne of his uncle, Tue-Dueck?" asked the chairman. "For settling the succession otherwise than in accordance with Annamite law and custom, we are permitted to consider only reasons of greatest weight. Do such reasons exist? These have been presented to me: Firstly, the French ambassador has under threat of war entered a protest against Dueck-Dueck's ascending the throne; secondly, the openly expressed enmity of the Prince towards the French and his behavior to the Christians and envoys in the pagoda today." A murmur ran through the assembly. "Thirdly, China declares that she will look upon an Emperor who inclines favorably to the French as a declaration of war, for Annam has long been subordinate to her, under her influence. In case we do not conform to her wishes, she threatens to incite the followers of the Black Flag to join with our mandarins in civil war. Now, what is your pleasure? Phue-Lin, you are the eldest, advise us what to do."

The old man rose again and said: "Many years have passed over my head while in the service of my country. Listen to my words, even though they are not those which you care to hear, those which ring most pleasantly in your ears. Dueck-Dueck shall not rule in Annam. I say this without being in the least influenced by the threats of the French. A prince who cannot rule himself is not fit to rule others. Of men of his stamp we have had a sufficient number. They have done naught but bring trouble and mischief into our land. Choose rather the mild Hiep-Hoa, whose name signifies peace and concord."

A storm of indignation broke from a part of the assembly and cries of "He is corrupt!" "He is a Christian in disguise!" "Traitor! Traitor!"—With difficulty the chairman restored order and the old man went on:

"Phue-Lin is not a corrupt traitor, but there are indeed many here among you who make this charge against him,—people who are receiving Chinese taels, who are in league with the followers of the Black Flag, and are now stirring up discord in the hope

of fishing in troubled waters. I well know that General Siphon is tarrying here. I am not a Christian, but I must admit that I do not look upon Christians as traitors. I have studied into their teachings, and much to which they subscribe in their faith is incomprehensible to me. Their morals are pure, purer even than those of Confucius, the greatest of the teachers of the Middle Kingdom. The thing which attracts me most to Christianity is the life and death of Christ. In my dealings with Christians I have always found them good and true citizens; even the worst of persecutions have not made them resort to revolution. Some say it is a foreign religion, and that, therefore, it must be rooted out. Are not the teachings of Confucius and Laotse in which most of our learned people are interested of Chinese origin? And is the belief of Buddha, which has such a hold on our people, of native origin? You know well that it was brought to us from India. If you wish to be logical, reject these and all others in the same way in which you do Christianity, and hold fast to the old Annamite belief in protecting spirits as the only cor-

rect one. I'd like to see whether the followers of Buddha and the students of Confucius bear death in the same patient, courageous way in which I have seen Christian soldiers, yes, even children bear it. The terrible persecutions of the followers of Christ have brought all the mischief into this land of Annam. Tolerate this religion and we shall have peace within and without. China has threatened our independence since the days of the Emperor Kublai Chan (1280), but she will not dare to seize upon our lands if we have the French for our friends and protectors. A hundred years ago France saved the Emperor Chia-Lung from the hands of the rebels; France will save us from the hands of the followers of the Black Flag, that miserable band of robbers, which China sends into our land. If we make a strong compact with the French and are just towards the Christians, Annam will bloom anew. By adopting any other course I see no end to the work of fire and sword and civil war."

Phue-Lin's speech made an impression on the Triendinh; however, many voices of complaint rose against it, particularly

that of the Master of Ceremonies who could not restrain himself, but raged against the Christians as the ones responsible for the wars; however, he and his adherents were in the minority. A sly priest made an end to the discussion by suggesting a middle course. "For the time being let the mild Hiep-Hoa, the favorite of the French, be chosen; then, at an opportune time,—for example, when the warships of the French have turned homeward,"—here he winked to the enemies of Hiep-Hoa—"the gods will take the matter in their own hands, and Dueck-Dueck will still come to the throne of his ancestors and destroy the Christians with fire and sword. In the meantime let the Minister of War make better preparations, and, on the pretext of an impending struggle with the French, try to get as many new guns and as much ammunition as possible."

This plan found almost unanimous approbation. Immediately Dueck-Dueck was called before the Triendinh. Dressed in an elaborate festal robe of silk he and his followers had been waiting in an adjoining room, very confident of success. The long

suspense had made him impatient, and, now when the Prime Minister told him the decision of the Council, his wrath knew no bounds. Seizing his sabre he would have run it through the body of Phue-Lin, whom he regarded as his chief enemy, had not those standing near by seized and disarmed him.

"Prince," said the Prime Minister, "the good of the state and your own make it necessary for us to retain you temporarily as prisoner." Then he commanded, "Lead his highness to the West Tower,"—and at a signal from the Mandarin the guard at the door surrounded the resisting youth and took him out by the rear entrance to the hall.

A few moments elapsed, then the Red Door of the assembly room opened, and through the royal portal came a pale, shy-looking young man in ceremonial dress of orange color, and ablaze with jewels. Behind him followed a procession of attendants. As he passed through the room, officials and servants threw themselves on the floor. The three head mandarins and the six ministers greeted him with: "Hail

our Emperor! Hail Hiep-Hoa!" Then they led him to the throne where the Master of Ceremonies put upon his head the crown,—half cap, half turban,—decorated with costly jewels. The members of the Council threw themselves down before the throne, and kissing the soles of his slippers which were placed on a footstool made of gilded tortoise-shell, swore allegiance to him.—"Hiep-Hoa! Peace and concord!" cried the crowd outside.

"We have won," said the French envoys to Father Hoang, when the news reached them.

"Yes," replied the interpreter, who understood his people better than the Frenchman, "if this is not a ruse of some sort."

"Do you fear treachery? The French are and have been on their guard. The Admiral asks a pledge of faith; the fortress is to be taken over as a French garrison."

"Is that a part of your message?" asked Father Hoang in surprise. "That means war, something for which we Christians must pay with our blood."

"We will protect you. As soon as we get the fortress we shall have the Emperor and his ministers in our power."

“Yes, but even so that will cause a revolution in the provinces where our co-religionists will be subjected to the knife.”

“And if we do not come into power, and the present garrison remains—are you any better off? Once and for all the battle must be fought, the freedom of the Christian religion established.”

“And may Almighty God be with us in this undertaking. You are right, although I believe through the use of tact the struggle can be avoided and our ends accomplished peaceably.”

CHAPTER VI.

In the West Tower.

The Christians who refused to make sacrificial offerings in the pagoda of Thio-Tri were taken under escort of a troop of soldiers to one of the great cumbrous square towers, placed at regular intervals on the outer wall of the fortress. On the way there they suffered many indignities at the hands of the soldiers, who were in a rage over the disturbance which had in their eyes defiled one of the richest and most gorgeous sanctuaries in Annam.

"Dogs!" cried the leader to one of his companions. "Dogs and the whelps of dogs! Think of it: they would not honor the spirit of our sainted Emperor, and yet they worship a dog that was hanged on the gallows. Have I not seen pictures of that dog? Pfui! What disgrace! And around the dog was painted a whole crowd of people who washed their faces in his blood—the blood of a crucified dog!"

Caricatures of this sort of Christ and his religion were really spread through China and Annam, and it is a remarkable thing that exactly the same sort of weapons were used by the old heathen Romans, only instead of the dog they had a jackass painted on the cross.—This blasphemy filled Thuan's heart with sorrow, giving him more pain than the blows he had received as an accompaniment to the view of the pictures. His mother comforted him, saying: "To make what amends we can for this awful outrage we will bear our Lord's cross."

"Yes, mother, willingly. And may He forgive them, for they blaspheme against that which they do not understand."

"What did the pert little fellow say?" cried one of the soldiers. "We do not and cannot understand what he understands. Take that for your insolence," and he gave him a box on the ears that almost knocked him to the ground.

"I do believe that is the page who with his Christian sorcery made all the infallible medicines which the priests from Kwang-Tri brought with them powerless. For it he was scourged. Yes, yes, it is he. See

the black and blue marks on his face. Hasn't he had enough of a lesson yet? So ho! Wait till old Min-Ghe, the jailer of the West Tower, gets after you, my boy. Here we are before his palace."

With beating hearts the prisoners walked across the wooden bridge spanning the moat which was filled with foul smelling water, and stood before one of the low doors securely guarded with thick planks and a locked grating. This was the entrance to the dungeon of the West Tower, the largest of the fortress. Its walls, fully six feet in thickness, ran to the rampart walk on the top without window opening of any sort, a thing calculated to rob even the bravest of those unfortunate enough to be committed to its dungeons of their courage.

"Take a look at the sun and the blue sky now," sneered one of the soldiers, "because when you once get in there you won't see them."

In response to the soldiers' knock and call a dirty old man appeared to whom the leader said:

"Make ready your cage, Min-Ghe, for we're bringing you some new birds. Have you

still room for more in those beautiful quarters of yours? If you've not, we'll take them to the East Tower."

"Room? Why not?" growled the old man. "Place enough, I suppose, though the dungeon is as full as an egg is of meat. Leave them here. Those that can't find room to lie on the floor can lie on top of the others. For birds of such beautiful plumage I have plenty of room. First of all let's take off their fine coats—though it's a shame, I grant—and see what's in the pockets.—So, so!—Gold and silver.—No, no, you won't have any use for it where you are going; we'll take care of it right here." Thereupon he put the money in his pocket.

"Now then, forward, march. Ha, ha! I see what's the matter. These are Christians!" he said to the soldiers. "I don't mind having them so much. They don't offer many complaints. It's remarkable how patient and happy they are. They always bring a sapeck (a small tin coin) or two with them, and their friends rarely leave them in the lurch. I always make something out of them."

Hereupon the old jailer closed the outer

door and stood with the prisoners in the dark vaulted archway of the thick walls of the tower. Lighting a torch and opening a second door on the other side of this entrance, he said: "Look out. There are some steps down. I will light the way until you find your places; after that light in here is altogether too much of a luxury."

A mouldy smell assailed the nostrils of the prisoners just entering, and their eyes got little more than a blurred picture of the interior in the flickering light of the torch. It was enough. Slippery steps led down about twelve feet to where on the floor lay a crowd of sorry looking human wretches—robbers, murderers, men with wild, crazed faces, all huddled together. The most of them had on a yoke—a sort of broad wooden collar which went around the neck—making it impossible for the wearer to stretch himself out comfortably on the mouldy, dirty rice straw, and besides each prisoner was chained to a ring or a peg in the wall or floor. Fully one hundred unfortunates were on the main floor, and still more than that in the cellar, where the water and filth stood in a great pool in the hollow in the

middle of the pavement. The walls were covered with slime, and the stagnant water of the moat which washed the outside of the tower trickled down on the inside.

In answer to Min-Ghe's orders for the prisoners to make room for the newcomers he was greeted with howls and curses. This did not put him in a temper, for he was still chuckling over the find which he had made. Getting a handful of clean rice straw he threw it on top of the filth, remarking:

"Here you are all fixed up much better than you deserve. Dogs and traitors, you are as bad, if not worse, than the cut-throats from the mountains, who at least pray to the gods of Annam."

With these words the old man went slowly up the stairs, took a final look at his prisoners as he held the torch above his head, threatened some who had caused the most uproar with their cries with an extra good cudgeling, and closed the door behind him with a vengeance. Complete darkness reigned in this pestilential hole in which at times there was comparative quiet.

Frank nestled up close to his mother who

tried to instil in him courage and trust in our Lord. "It won't last forever," she said. "We shall some day wander together under the palms and the banyan trees of the park."

"Or in the Garden of Paradise," answered the boy, "where it is still more beautiful."

Then after a short pause he added: "In just such a prison as this, was it not, mother, that our small cousin Dominicus Thuan lay for a whole month before he was put to death? He will pray for me to have the strength to bear what he bore. His crucifix is on my breast. The old jailer, when he took my cloak, did not find it,"—and he drew the treasure from his bosom, kissed it, and handed it to his mother to kiss. Then both prayed, and though the prison resounded with the wailings and cursings of their companions, God filled their hearts with sweet peace and holy trust.

Quite different were the feelings which raged in the breast of Prince Dueck-Dueck, or, as he wished to style himself, Emperor Phue-Dak. On account of his rank, naturally, he was not taken to the dungeon with the ordinary prisoners, but was put on

the top floor of the tower which rose in Chinese style above the rampart walls in two low stories of diminishing size. From the windows of this tower prison stretched a magnificent panorama. To the east was the inner wall; beyond that the park with its groups of trees, small ponds, pagodas, houses, and the elaborately decorated palace, which glistened in the sun. To the west, at the foot of the walls, ran the River Hue, alive with hundreds of boats of all sizes and colors, and beyond that the city with its old wooden houses and temples, large and small, hidden away in the shade of palm and banyan trees. In the distance were fruitful garden plains through which the river wound like a silver band to the dark forests of the foothills. The sun was sinking, there touching earth with its last rays.

The Prince had no eyes for the scene before him. He paced up and down the room with a heavy step, and when he chanced to glance out, the royal fortress and city only served to remind him of the crown,—of which he had been so sure,—snatched from his hands. In impotent

rage he stamped on the floor, and cursed the Christians to whose influence he attributed the loss of his throne.

"Help me, oh, help me, all ye spirits of the rulers of Annam. I mean you, Minh-Mang, and you, Thio-Tri,—all who washed your hands in Christian blood,—and you, Tue-Dueck, who parted this life cursing the Christians. All ye gods in heaven or hell, to whose likenesses we make offerings in the temples, help me to the throne. You are all enemies of the foreign god. It is a matter which concerns you as well as me. Help me to the throne, and I will reward you with streams of Christian blood, and the flames of burning Christian villages."

When the darkness of night had settled down over the royal fortress and capital city, the Prince was still raging. At last exhausted, he was about to throw himself on his bed when he heard approaching footsteps. The door opened and there appeared three men with a lighted candle protected by a little globe. Recognizing one as the Minister of War, the Prince turned deadly pale and asked:

"You come from Hiep-Hoa with the command to put me to death?"

"We bring you a crown, not death, Prince, that is, if you will join with us."

"And the conditions are—?"

"Union with the followers of the Black Flag at the price of the life and property of all Christians."

"So the gods have heard my call for help? Agreed. I am yours body and soul."

CHAPTER VII.

The Conspiracy.

Old Min-Ghe, who with many low bows had accompanied the Minister of War and his companion up the outer steps of the rampart, was at a signal from the high official, whom he recognized, left as guard at the drawbridge leading across to the gallery which ran around the outside of the two low stories. Once over, the Minister drew up this bridge with the idea of making sure of having no listeners. Scarcely had the three nocturnal visitors walked into the Prince's room, when the jailer pushed a plank across the moat and tiptoed to the door to listen to what was said. But exert himself as he would, he could not hear the conversation, carried on in a subdued tone of voice, sufficiently well to follow it.

"My accursed old ears get deafer and deafer every day. I cannot catch what they are saying, but I'm sure it's something I could turn to good account. I'll wager

my old gray pate that the three are plotting something in this night time that would be worth a thousand kwan (one kwan = six hundred sapecks = twenty cents), if I could only get it to the right ears.—Shall I call one of the servants?—No, he may prove too knowing, and what is more likely use the information for his own purposes. Ha! I have an idea! The lad who was brought in to-day. Ha, ha! That is an idea! I have him wholly in my power.”

While saying these last words to himself, the jailer hurried back over the plank again and down the stairs. Two minutes later he appeared in the dungeon with a lighted torch and began shaking the small Thuan to rouse him from sleep. At first the boy could not make out where he was and what was wanted of him, and the old man gave him little time to think. Scarcely before his mother had a chance to bless him and whisper a word of comfort, he was dragged up the slippery stairs and outside the door, where the cool pure night air after the vile odors of the dungeon quickly brought him to his senses. The old man explained what he wanted. “They may be talking of the

prevention of bloodshed," he said. And when the boy, unable to decide what to do or say, hesitated a moment, he added: "More likely it's a plot against the life of the Emperor, as I heard them call his name, but I could get no more than that. Now I tell you once and for all, if you do not do my bidding, or if you keep back anything you hear, I'll strangle you, and then push you into the moat."

Frank declared himself ready to obey, and Min-Ghe led him quickly to the gallery of the tower, and up near to one of the windows, the lower half of which had over it a screen.

"Now, my little man, sharpen up those ears of yours. When they come out, you crawl down and hide behind that gun carriage. I'll have to be at my post at the drawbridge."

With this the old man betook himself away. The boy knew not what duty demanded of him under the circumstances.—Now words which compelled his attention fell upon his ears. The conspirators talked of the extermination of all Christians in Annam. "We must go at it systematically," a voice

said. "The lower mandarins in all communities must be called upon by their superiors to prepare a register containing the names of all Christians and all people suspected of having leanings towards Christianity, and wherever a Christian mandarin is found, he must be removed immediately, and a patriot must be put in his place. In a month we can obtain this register with the names of all traitors, then we shall be ready to strike the blow."

The man who had up to this time spoken the page recognized as the Minister of War from his shrill, rattling voice. He now asked, "Do you approve of this plan?" A voice made answer, "Yes"; another objected: "It is altogether too detailed and troublesome. We cannot wait for a month when now is the time to strike. If the Capital gives the signal for a general uprising, the provinces will follow. The mandarins almost without exception are patriotically affected. The burning pillars of the missionary institutions here in Hue will be the signal for firing Christian houses all over the land, and the total destruction of all missionaries. If we could take off the

heads of the French in their own country, then we would find it an easy matter to deal with the French question. They would not advance very far into our land with their great ships. In eight days, when the moon is full, let us make the attack. During the week we can be collecting saddled troops in the northern provinces, and send messages to the chieftains of the wild mountain tribes who are to be had at a moment's notice when murdering and plundering is done."

"Your Minister of War can manage the surprise here in the fortress," added the speaker. "And you, brave keeper of the River Gate, can get possession of the keys to the fortress at any time. The thing can not fail. Two thousand men, followers of the Black Flag, are not three days' march away. With their assistance you can surprise the fortress, even if they do not join in the uprising as I am sure they will do. The palace can be easily surrounded and Hiep-Hoa forced to drink the cup of poison. Then our glorious Prince Dueck-Dueck can ascend the throne of his ancestors."

"And, as soon as I have the power in my hands," said Dueck-Dueck, "I shall

give orders for the extermination of all Christians; I will in person at the head of the followers of the Black Flag attack the accursed missionary houses of the Capital, and single-handed take off the head of the Father Superior and lay it at the feet of his fellow-workers. As the brave Captain says, the burning of Christian houses and temples in Hue shall be a signal to all the mandarins of all the neighboring towns and villages to fall upon the traitors with fire and sword. We will spread over this land such a wave of bloodshed that within twice twenty-four hours there will be no such thing as a foreign occupation of Annam."

The boy who had not lost a single word of this conversation shuddered and listened in terror while the others agreed to this plan. Then they arranged some more minutiae. The Master of the River Gate suggested that the General of the troops of the Black Flag should surround about one hundred of his band and bring them as prisoners into the fortress; then, on the night settled upon, arm them and with their help surprise the guard. After discussing all the *pros* and *cons*, this was agreed to.

Then the question was put as to whether they were to be satisfied merely with the death of all Christian men, or whether women and children were to be included. The Minister of War and the Master of the River Gate wished to spare all who would renounce the foreign belief; but the Prince and the General of the Black Flag preferred to wipe out "the whole accursed brood". The night finally set was that of the next full moon, just when the moon stood so high in the heavens that it could be seen looking out from the inner entrance of the River Gate. Then this gate would be opened to the followers of the Black Flag, who would be ready and lying in wait in their gayly painted little boats. The Prince also desired the death of his enemies in the Triendinh—the old Phue-Lin and some others—and even went so far as to make out a list of names of those who were to be disposed of to satisfy his revenge. He wished the three to help him escape immediately, but all advised against this, considering it best for the success of the plan for him to remain for the few days until the full of the moon as prisoner. His escape

would only arouse Hiep-Hoa's mistrust. At last to this the Prince gave unwilling consent, and the plotters departed.

Scarcely had Frank done as the jailer commanded, and hidden himself behind one of the small guns placed on the gallery of the tower, than the three men came out and passed by. Bending over a little too far, he struck his head on a part of the iron of the gun carriage. The General, hearing the noise, drew his sabre and made a pass into the dark corner.

"Who is there?"

"No one," answered the Minister of War. "It must have been a rat, as this tower is overrun with them. The drawbridge is up, and there is the guard old Min-Ghe."

The sabre just missed Frank's head. He trembled like an aspen leaf, and offered up a little prayer to his protecting angel.

"I thought it was something larger than a rat that moved in that corner," said the angry soldier, and he would have made another pass, had not his companion remarked that as it was late they must hurry to get away. With beating heart the boy heard them go over the drawbridge and down the

stairs. Below in front of the tower they separated, the guard of the Water Gate returning to his post and the other two making a tour of the fortress under the pretext of visiting the various outposts, but in reality to give the General the arrangement of the fortifications.

When Frank had recovered himself somewhat from his awful fright, he began to consider whether to fly to the missionaries or the Emperor to give warning of impending danger. The drawbridge was up; if he got down to the foot of the tower between the outer and the inner walls, how could he get through the well guarded gates to go either to Hue or the royal palace? He could jump to the River below and make a trial of swimming. He did not lack the courage, but he felt that he had not the strength for such a task. Just here Min-Ghe appeared and let the drawbridge down. To him the boy resolved to tell only the part which concerned the surprising of the fortress and the death of the Emperor.

"If the plotters carry out their plans the Christians will have naught to fear," he began. Then when the old man had taken

him in his room and locked the door, he told the day and the hour of the attack, the names of the plotters, the way in which they were going to get the robber bands into the fortress, in fact, all that concerned that part of the scheme. The old man, opening his eyes in surprise, wondered if he had heard correctly. In answer to the boy's request for them both to go to the Emperor immediately, and both be witnesses of what had happened, he made reply: "In that case I must divide the reward with you. No, my lad, I prefer to take all of it. You go to your cage, but first listen to me. If you tell one syllable of what you have heard, I'll choke you before the face and eyes of your mother, and torture you besides as no man was ever tortured. You understand. March along."

A few moments later the boy found himself again in the prison, not near his mother, but in the opposite part of the room, fastened to a peg in the floor with a robber.

CHAPTER VIII.

The Final Move.

The next evening the page, Lhu, was in the garden of his great-uncle, the wise old Phue-Lin, who lived in one of the small houses of the royal park. Phue-Lin was a great lover of gardening, and even now in his old age spent a great part of his leisure among the plants and flowers of his own small garden. He often said that he attributed his good health and old age to the exercise which he had always taken in the pure air in beautifying his grounds. Holding Lhu fast by the hand he walked up and down the paths, showing the boy the different plants. "Here", said he, "are many varieties of roses brought me from France by the missionaries. When the sun goes down you must help me water them. There are the beautiful Japanese lilies, and the wonderful Methonica, a species of the same family having a golden cup edged with flaming purple. This, too, comes from a

foreign land. Beyond the mountains of India in the far-off country of Africa they have their home," explained the old man. "Do not touch them; though they are very beautiful they are poisonous. They teach a lesson which you will find it well to remember, that things with a very beautiful exterior are oftentimes not so pure and good on the inside. And notice, too, that the flowers are not on a strong stalk, but arranged among the leaves on runners which climb on neighboring plants. Here is another lesson for you. Just as this splendid lily, the queen of lilies, needs props and supports, so our Princes can only establish and keep their power by leaning on each other. How do you like service under our new Emperor?"

"Oh, much better than under the old one. No one could approach Tue-Dueck without fear and trembling; but Hiep-Hoa is mild and pleasant. I have already asked him to let little Thuan out of prison and have him back here again for page."

"That was very noble of you, but not at all tactful. You should have consulted me before making such a request as that.—What did the Emperor say to you?"

“He said he would refer the matter to his councilors. As Thuan and the Christians had offended public opinion seriously, he hardly dared forgive them so soon. Then he asked if I was a Christian. I denied that, although I told him that I had heard all about Christianity and liked it.”

“You will yet bring me into trouble with your openness. I’ll be suspected of secretly being a Christian. Did he not ask you about my views?”

“Yes, and I said that you kept me from being a Christian; then he wanted me to tell him what I knew about the Christian teachings, and I talked for more than an hour. I told how they believe in only one God, who created heaven and earth, and who sits in heaven surrounded and worshipped by countless angels; how some of these spirits plotted against their Master and for punishment were cast out of heaven into the flaming pits of hell; how God created men to take the place of these faithless ones, and put them in the Garden of Paradise; how the devil tempted them to disobedience which brought death and suffering into the world; how God, to save

mankind, sent into the world His only-begotten Son, who was born in a manger, and crucified on Calvary. He listened to all, but when I got to the part about Christ's birth in the manger, he would not believe me, and said that the Son of God ought to be at least the son of an Emperor of Annam, or better the son of an Emperor of China."

"And what answer did you make?"

"The one that Thuan did, when I made that same objection which I first heard from you. He said that in this way God showed a much greater love in sending some one who would be a Lord unto rich and poor.— Here I had to stop because they came for him to go to the Court of the Women to have some music. He gave me a piece of gold and said that to-morrow he wanted to hear some more; then he went in where they were playing stringed instruments, tomtoms, and kettle-drums."

"What did you do with the gold piece?"

"I ran as fast as I could to the West Tower where Thuan and his mother are, and gave it to the jailer to let me in to see the prisoners. He took the money, put it in his pocket, and said that he could not

to-day, that I must come some other time, but that he would get some better food for the two. Do you suppose he will, uncle?"

"Hardly, my child," answered the old man shrugging his shoulders. "To-morrow or the day after I'll get permission and take you to visit the prisoners, so that you can see for yourself and take warning as regards the mad ideas of that religion you like so much. Now come into this camelia arbor and read to me. You know I always close the day with a chapter from the writings of the wisest of all men, Confucius."

While the old man and boy were sitting in the beautiful arbor, Min-Ghe leaving the door of the West Tower in charge of one of the oldest and most trusted servants, after giving him strict orders to allow no one to see the Christians, was starting off on a little expedition. Contrary to his usual custom, the old man had wound a clean cloth about his head and put on a much better than usual dark colored cloak. So remarkable was the change this made in his appearance that an acquaintance passing by called out in astonishment: "My dear Min-Ghe, my true friend, upon my word, you are fixed up

like a bridegroom! I scarcely recognized you. Whither away? To the Emperor? In recognition of faithful services at last has he called you to be a Mandarin of Justice?"

Min-Ghe made no reply, but in his rough way managed to get away from the man, and muttered to himself: "A Mandarin of Justice! I shall demand something much better than that as my reward. I'll take clinking gold in preference to an office and honor, and this time it will be a nice little sum of money. Have courage, Min-Ghe, do not let the three men frighten you out of your wits."

In haste he rushed to a little tap-room frequented by soldiers, and ordered a small glass of saki, wine made of burnt rice, and then a second, and a third, after which deliberately taking from his pocket three sapecks, small tin coins having on them a picture of the Emperor, handed them to the innkeeper, who offered him another glass of saki. This Min-Ghe refused, saying: "After an hour or so, perhaps, I'll take another, but just now I have a little errand to do, and I must have my mind

clear for the business in hand. When it is over I'll gladly drink to the honor of the three gentlemen whom I'm about to visit."

"Luck to you," cried the innkeeper, as Min-Ghe set out and quickly entered the gate of the fortress, then turned into one of the avenues leading to the office of the Minister of War. As he went along he said to himself: "I'll take the bull by the horns. If I once get these men where I want them, there will be no trouble about the rest. With the money which the three will pay me in my pocket—why—then I'll consider telling the plot to the Emperor. Perhaps I'll be very clever and cast my lot with the Prince who is a prisoner, and demand hush money from him."

Night had settled down. Upon nearing his destination the old man slackened his pace and remained standing for a time.

"I have to consider the matter well. No, he won't dare to use his power against me.—I will be seen going to him, and I'll take care to let him know that I have been seen. By betraying me he will openly declare himself to be my murderer, and then he will be held responsible for my death. All

the suspicions will be on him, and the plan which they had decided upon will be exposed. He will not dare to arrest me and bring me into court,—and yet all is not as it ought to be. There is something about it.—If that young one talks, I'll be taken as his accomplice and hanged. I wish I had choked him and thrown him into the river; not even an old rooster would have cock-a-doodled over his departure. Would it not be better for me to go back and dispose of him?—Oh no, there is no such hurry about the matter. He's safe just now, and to-morrow, or at best the morning after, I'll stop his mouth for time and eternity."

With this resolve he screwed up his courage and entered the palace. In the ante-room of the Minister of War he found servants, an armed guard, and different officials. With an impudent sort of swagger he walked along and demanded an interview with His Highness on a matter of importance. "He knows me," he said, "I am the jailer of the West Tower."

"Of the West Tower where they have Prince Dueck - Dueck imprisoned? Has anything happened to him?"

"My business concerns the Minister of War," replied the old man assuming a haughty air.

Min-Ghe's arrival was announced, and in a very few moments he was admitted to the presence of the dignitary he sought. This mandarin, dressed in a rich court costume, was seated behind a small table. The threatening intent expression on his face almost caused the old man to lose his nerve; only the money which he hoped to get urged him to action. Impudently going up to the table he said in a husky tone: "The conversation which took place last night in the Prince's tower room is known to me. Properly I might and ought to go with it immediately to the Emperor, Hiep-Hoa. Had I done that, or were I to do it now, I'd not give a sapeck for your head, your Highness. But I am a good fellow, you know, and like you, and would prefer to see Dueck-Dueck, who hates most heartily the accursed French and Christians on the throne, so I have come to ask you how much you will pay me to keep silent until after the next full moon?"

The Minister opened his eyes in astonish-

ment at these words and turned pale, but recovered himself sufficiently to reply with his hand on his dagger: "You miserable wretch, death ought to be your reward."

Min-Ghe answered: "Listen to a word or two, and make your dagger thrusts afterwards. I expected just such a reception as this and prepared for it. If I am not at home within two hours, my wife has orders to send a sealed letter which I left in her care to the Prime Minister, and then it will be known that my death came about at your hands.—I do not need to tell your Highness more."

The Minister let his hand fall from his dagger, and said with a little forced laugh: "You are, indeed, a knowing fellow, and we will do well to have you on our side.—How much do you want?"

"Two thousand kwan."

"Two thousand kwan! And one kwan is six hundred sapecks and that makes one million two hundred thousand sapecks. Man, are you crazy?"

"Well, I would have done it for one thousand, but your seizing your dagger told me that I was staking my life."

"And what surety have we that you are not going to betray us?"

"My interests. Pay me one thousand down, and the rest when the plan succeeds. Or, do you think the Court would give me more for my information? Well,—if you give me the thousand now,—it is a good deal."

The Minister revolved the matter in his mind, then said:

"Very well, you shall have the money, but swear to me by Buddha and all the three thousand spirits that you will keep silent and be true to us."

Min-Ghe was ready for this oath. He took a piece of bullion worth one thousand kwan and signed what he supposed was a receipt. But the sly mandarin had slipped another piece of paper before him, and in the dimly lighted room he did not notice to what he was putting his name. After friendly greetings the old man took his departure. Scarcely had he left before the Minister gave orders to two armed men to follow and seize him, while a servant was sent in all haste to Min-Ghe's wife with the paper which the old man had just signed,

demanding the letter of which he had spoken.

“Yes, my old jailer,” said the dignitary, “you are very sly and clever, but you are not sly enough to get ahead of an Annamite Minister of War.”

CHAPTER IX.

The Prisoners.

The jailer was hurrying along with his treasure in his hand as fast as his old legs would carry him, but when he had almost reached the inner gate of the fortress he stopped a moment to take breath.

"The moon has almost passed its first quarter," he said to himself, "and after six or seven days it will be full.—No, no, upon my faith! I must look after feathering my own nest. If all goes well with the Prince and the Master of the River Gate, my fortune's made. That was a sharp move on my part to tell that story about the sealed letter, which I had left in the possession of my wife. Ha, ha! that ruse saved my life. But if this comes to be found out, then I'll be dead for a long time. Perhaps I'd better get out of Hue with my thousand kwan.—Oh, old Min-Ghe, don't be such a coward! Don't you know perfectly well that the Minister of War has more important busi-

ness to attend to than chasing around to hunt up your wife? Of course, the thing will go through: the beginning was the dangerous part and that has succeeded admirably. What I have to look after now is getting that Christian boy out of the way. If he talks, a rope goes around my neck. Only the dead are silent. I'll take him again to the gallery, tell him he must do some more listening, choke him a little and push him off into the river. It will be a kindness to do this, because if they bring him before the judge next week, and he again refuses to burn incense before the genealogical tablet of the emperors, they will tear him to pieces with pinchers."

After the old man had quieted his conscience, which really did prick him when he considered murdering an innocent child, with this last thought, he started to go on, when he heard footsteps behind him and in the moonlight saw armed men approaching. Quickly he slipped behind one of the great trunks of a banyan tree which spread itself across the way and hid. Soon the men, two bailiffs, sent by the Minister of War, came up.

"I thought I saw him just on ahead of us," said one.

"He can't be far away," said the other.

"Come on. He must have gone through the gate. At any rate we can easily find out from the guard, and if he has not, why we can catch him when he does come."

"Why, do they mean me?" asked the jailer. "Impossible! He does not dare. That would be a fool's trick. The deuce take it!—What if he does dare? I'll take a roundabout way and go through one of the other gates to my house. No, no, that's of no use, for they will wait for me at my door. It is impossible. The Minister of War cannot betray me without betraying himself and all the plans."

The old man followed the bailiffs at a goodly distance, thinking over what he'd better do in case the Minister had really sent these men after him; but when he reached the gate he had come to no conclusion. There he met the servant who had been sent out with the paper which he had unwittingly signed, and asked him if he knew why the two bailiffs, who had followed so soon after his departure, had been sent

out. Hardly had the question passed his lips, when the servant, who recognized the jailer in the moonlight, seized him by the collar, threw him to the ground and called to the men who had just passed through the gate.

In a moment he was bound hand and foot, although he offered the bailiffs a big sum of money,—ten, fifty, yes, a hundred kwan apiece. They only laughed and said that it was impossible for him to pay any such sums, and when he tried to scream they put a gag in his mouth, picked him up and half dragged, half carried him by a short cut across the park to the garden of the Minister of War.

In one corner of this garden was what once had been the cell of a Buddhist monk, a sort of little temple, which was used sometimes as a private prison. Already more than one enemy of the Minister of War had mysteriously disappeared here. Into this cell the bailiffs pushed the old man and then closed a trap door without taking the trouble to remove either the gag from his mouth or the cords from his hands and feet. Immediately they reported to their master

that they had succeeded in getting the jailer and received the liberal tip of which they were sure on occasions like this. Soon the messenger returned with word that Min-Ghe had no wife.

"Oh, he has lied to me, too, has he?" said the Minister to himself, considering a plan of disposing of the deceiver.

It was a long time before Min-Ghe roused himself from his dazed condition after being thrown down the stairs into the awful hole. A severe pain in the right shoulder on which he had landed brought him to his senses. He wished to get up, but the cords on his legs hindered him; he wished to put his hands on the spot that was painning him, but they were bound behind him, and the slightest movement which he made with his right arm pained him so that he would have screamed aloud had there not been a gag in his mouth. With the realization of his position came a frightful fit of passion which made him forget his suffering for a few moments. He twisted himself about like a worm on the floor of the filthy prison, going from one wall to another. The curses and imprecations to which he tried to give

utterance came only as murmuring sounds, as vainly he tried to dash his brains out against the hard prison wall. After an hour or more he fell into a sort of stupor. How long this may have lasted he had no way of knowing, but when he came to he felt a burning thirst. Again he twisted and threw himself about in the hope of finding a water jug, but there was none. Then he remembered how often when his prisoners had begged for water he had told them with curses to drink the water which trickled down the sides of the wall. Now so thirsty was he that he would willingly have drunk anything that was wet, any of the filth on the walls or the floors he would gladly have licked up, could he have got the gag out of his mouth.

Then a fit of despair seized him.

"This serves me right," he said down in his heart. "With the same measure with which I meted to the Christians, it is being measured to me again. In wretchedness must I hunger and thirst in this miserable hole—then—what then?"

The Buddhistic pictures of hell as shown in the entrance ways of all pagodas rose

before his mind. He saw the spirits of the damned trampled under the feet of wild elephants, or pierced through by their tusks, torn to pieces by lions and tigers, strangled and stung by adders, snatched away by dragons and winged monsters, tormented by devils in the most terrible forms devised by human art. His religion gave him no hope of a merciful God who would forgive and receive with open arms the repentant sinner who turned to Him, and so it is not to be wondered at that in his awful terror he lost his senses. After tossing about and giving full play to his doubts, at last, through sheer exhaustion, he became quieter and said to himself: "I have one thousand kwan in my pocket and shall get another thousand. What matters it if I am thirsty? For one thousand kwan I can buy a great deal of saki,—a whole river of saki. And if I promise Buddha the half of one thousand kwan, instead of sending me to hell, which is only for poor devils, he will take me to Nirvana. One thousand kwan! My friend the Minister of War will give me one thousand, the Prince ten thousand, or perhaps one hundred thousand, then I can buy

all Annam and live in happiness. But, oh dear, how thirsty I am and how my shoulder aches! Help! help rich Min-Ghe!"

While the miserable jailer, almost distracted by his doubts and fears, and half crazed, lay in his dungeon more dead than alive, our young friend was now for the fourth day in the prison of the West Tower chained to a peg with a wild-looking foreign man. Only when the dungeon was lighted with a torch long enough for the prisoners to eat the rice and drink the water brought to them, could Frank begin to see across the place to look for his mother. Surely she was chained to one of the rings, or she would have made her way about, and found him. He longed for her. If he could only tell her of the awful secret which burdened his mind—the secret of the plot against the life of the Emperor and all the Christians in the kingdom of Annam; if he could only tell her, she would give him good advice; if, when praying, he could but see her pale face in the distance and receive her greetings and blessing, how happy he would be.

When the torch was taken away and darkness again reigned in the dungeon, he

took out little Thuan's crucifix, kissed it and prayed. In spite of the filth and discomfort about him a heavenly calm filled his heart, which had its effect on the young robber at his side. At first this youth had given way to paroxysms of temper and cursed and cuffed Frank, but when for this rough treatment he received only love and kindness, he was touched. Never in his life before had he had any experience of this sort, and there came over him a change. He looked at the boy in astonishment and at last asked for an explanation.

"You have some magic or a charm of some sort, with which you call up patience and sweet temper to help you bear the horrors of this accursed hole," he said. "Don't lie about it, for haven't I seen you take it out of your bosom and kiss it?"

"My brother, you have, indeed, seen me take something out of my bosom. I have something, the possession of which, yes, the very thought of which makes me happy in the midst of my troubles, but it is not a charm, nor any kind of magic, as you think."

"Let me take it. I'd like to try its workings here in this miserable old prison."

"It would not help you; the power comes through belief in the religion of which it is a symbol," answered the boy.

"And what is that religion? Tell me."

Then little Frank Thuan told the robber of Jesus Christ and His death on the cross. The man listened, at first not giving much credence to his words, but gradually, like the iceberg subjected to the hot rays of the March sun, his heart melted. There was some good left in the desperate young fellow, and it was brought out by the living breath of God's grace. The man himself knew not how it happened, but when scene after scene of the crucifixion was vividly described to him, hot tears came to his eyes and streamed down over his bearded face.

"And the holy man was crucified between two robbers, do you say?" he interrupted.

"Between two robbers, and both reviled him."

"Pfui, what a shame! I do not believe that I would have been so bad, even though my hands had been as stained with blood as theirs.—The good man ought to have cursed them for their brutality."

"On the contrary, He would have forgiven

them both, had they turned to Him. The one did, touched by His heavenly mildness and patience, as the other railed at Him, saying, 'Dost thou not fear God, seeing thou art in the same condemnation? And we indeed justly; for we receive the due reward of our deeds: but this man hath done nothing amiss.' And he said unto Jesus, Lord, remember me when Thou comest into Thy kingdom. And Jesus said unto him, Verily I say unto thee, to-day shalt thou be with Me in paradise."

Thuan was silent for a time; then he heard his companion sigh and prayed down in his heart that God's grace would complete the good work which was begun.

After a time the robber asked if he would dare to hope for forgiveness from this god of love and mercy.

"Most certainly," replied Frank, and then he told the parable of the prodigal son.

"That is a beautiful story," said the repentant sinner. "Let me take the crucifix; I'd like to kiss it. I feel some of the peace and joy which fills your heart. To-morrow tell me some more. Among the hills where I live we never hear anything of Christianity."

Frank was comforted and thanked God that he had been the means of bringing the soul of one prisoner to salvation. "God does all things for the best," he said to himself, "and He will send the message of Christianity into the farthest parts of our fatherland, let our enemies plan as they will."

CHAPTER X.

The Evening before the Attack.

It was the day before the full moon. Very early in the morning Phue-Lin and his grand-nephew Lhu appeared at the West Tower, and, showing the seal of the Prime Minister, demanded an interview with the Christian prisoner Thuan. Three times had they been there to make this request, but had been denied admission, as they had neglected to get a written permit. This time they had it and also the seal. The jailer who was taking Min-Ghe's place apologized to Phue-Lin, saying that he had the strictest orders to allow no one to talk to Thuan, but now Min-Ghe had been gone for five days, and no one knew where he was. It was conjectured that he had met with some accident—perhaps had fallen in the river—for the old man was given to taking too much saki at times. Of course, he would obey the Minister's command and take him to the boy, or, if he preferred, bring the boy to him.

"No, we will go into the prison and talk with him there," said Phue-Lin, wishing to let his nephew see conditions for himself, as he inclined more and more towards embracing Christianity. The jailer took a torch and lighted them into the dreadful dungeon. Hardly had they opened the door, seen the sight before them and smelt the vile odor which assailed their nostrils, when the old man was almost overcome, leaned against the wall and covered his face with his hands, while Lhu gave a scream of terror and pity. The old man motioned the jailer to let them out and bring Thuan to them.

"Very well," said he with a little laugh, "I knew well enough that the air down there was not good for all lungs."

After a few moments Frank Thuan appeared. His face was very pale and showed plainly the black and blue marks caused by the terrible scourging which he had suffered, but his eyes brightened at sight of his little friend and his grand-uncle. "Now God be praised and the Blessed Virgin who heard my prayers. In their mercy they sent you here just at the right time. Dear, wise

Phue-Lin, come aside with me. I wish to speak to you in all haste of a matter of greatest importance. Lhu, please excuse me; I'll be back and talk to you in a few moments."

Going into a small room by themselves, the boy told all the details of the plot which he had heard. Phue-Lin could hardly believe his ears, and asked to have it all gone over a second time, then wrote down the names of the chief conspirators and an outline of what they proposed doing on a slip of paper. "Your words are borne out by facts. Yesterday the Minister of War seized about two hundred followers of the Black Flag, and shut them up in the East and West Towers. Very likely that plot accounts for the disappearance of old Min-Ghe. Surely no one wanted him in the secret. And, my boy, do you know you will be in danger of a fate similar to Min-Ghe's—whatever that may be—if you go to making complaints against the mightiest men in the land?" he said.

"Yes, I understand all that. I was threatened with the most terrible death you ever heard of, if I betrayed a syllable of all this;

but is it not my duty to save the Emperor and all the innocent Christians?"

"Yes, you want to do that because the main part of the plot concerns the Christians."

"Even if it were only the life of the Emperor, it would be my duty as a true page to sacrifice myself for him, even though he persecuted the Christians the way Tue-Deuck did."

"You Christians are a remarkable people," cried Phue-Lin, "but now is not the time to talk about religious teachings. It will soon be time for the surprise, and we have got to make up our minds whether to try to thwart the plan or save ourselves; and on thinking it over I believe the second the more sensible thing to do. Already there are a large number of the followers of the Black Flag within the fortress and in possession of the Water Gate. More than a hundred of them in small boats are scattered about on the river; other crowds are lurking not far away. What can the Emperor do? He has sent his best troops up the river to seize some earthworks, and report has it that a French fleet is approaching.

His star which has never been much in the ascendancy is setting quickly. For you to sacrifice yourself to him would be to act without foresight—to play the part of a fool. We had better save ourselves. I'll get an order from the Emperor banishing you, your mother, and all the other Christians who refused to burn incense to the spirit of Tue-Dueck. I'll also get an order to release you from prison immediately, and when you come out I'll have a boat in readiness. We'll give the missionaries here in the city warning, and to-night before the full moon stands well up in the heavens we will all be in a place of safety."

For a moment Frank was silent while he thought it all over, then he said: "If we really could not possibly avert the mischief, of course, it would not be a question of duty; then we could just save ourselves. But let us at least try to do something. It is scarcely eight o'clock, and we have until eight to-night—twelve hours. Can we not put trustworthy guards over the troops in the East and West Towers, and find a reliable man for the River Gate? Of course, the leaders of the plot will be suspicious in a

moment. O, if I were only a man and free! I would save the Emperor and my Christian brethren or die for them."

In astonishment the old man looked at the boy in whose eyes he saw courage and determination. "If the Emperor's servants were all as true as you, there would be no trouble. Where is he to get the trusty guards of whom you speak?"

"I know three: Thu, Ngo-Bin, and Min-Nam. They are all Christians, and Christians do not dare to be traitors."

"Ngo-Bin and Min-Nam Christians! And they were so long and so often about the person of Tue-Dueck without that enemy of their religion touching a hair of their heads. I am convinced that it must be political wisdom which leads our Emperor not only to tolerate Christianity, but also to support it.—I'll hurry into the palace and urge Hiep-Hoa to take some quick and decisive step. You will hear from me very soon."

Phue-Lin told the jailer that he had left the prisoner in the room with his nephew, for whom he would call in a short time, and had him bring Mrs. Thuan where the boys were. It was a happy moment when the

three met. Frank told about the robber who had expressed his willingness to embrace the Christian religion, and they all marveled at the wonderful ways of God's saving grace. Of the plot Frank said nothing, for he did not wish to frighten his mother, and too, he could not well speak under the present circumstances.

Lhu told him how good the new Emperor was, how he listened while he told him about Jesus, and that he really believed he was a Christian. Then he went on to say that he had kept his promise, and offered up the prayer which Frank had taught him every night on his knees before the beautiful picture of the Blessed Virgin with the Christ Child, and that he wished to be baptized and would be just as soon as the Emperor was. Naively he added that so long as Christians ran the risk of being thrown into so terrible a prison as the one in the West Tower, of being beaten half to death, and torn to pieces with pinchers, he had not sufficient courage, but that he was praying to the Holy Mother for it.

"She will give you courage. Only pray devotedly," said Thuan's mother.

They had talked for perhaps an hour when Phue-Lin appeared with several of the mandarins and gave orders to have all the Christians released immediately. Naturally Mrs. Thuan was delighted and tried to express her thanks, but Phue-Lin could take no time to talk. Telling her to make preparations for an immediate journey, he took Frank, who was to resume his duties as page, and Lhu to the palace. There Frank changed his prison garb for a silk gown and was quickly taken through one of the red doors into the room in which sat Hiep-Hoa and his councillors.

The young Emperor was in a state of great excitement which his advisers shared. The assertions of the page had been confirmed. Concealed weapons had been found on the captured followers of the Black Flag; a number of suspicious looking boats lay in the river near the Water Gate, and the Minister of War and many other influential persons were not to be found. The councillors had decided upon flight, since the Emperor could not depend upon his guards, but were in a quandary as to where and how to go. Many of the men present took

the interruption occasioned by Phue-Lin's bringing in Frank to absent themselves and seek places of safety. The young Emperor, in spite of the excitement, received the boy in a friendly manner, and, asking him to be his first page, placed around his neck a costly gold chain as a reward of fidelity.

"Truly," he added sadly, "my favor will be of no use, but rather of harm to you, for after the advice of my councillors I must betake myself to flight. I shall be glad to have you number yourself among the trusted few who accompany me."

"I'll stand by you until death," answered Frank Thuan. "But does not the loss of the fortress mean the success of the plot and the loss of the throne?"

The Emperor looked questioningly at his advisers, who by shrugging the shoulders answered "Yes" to the boy's question.

"What more is there to do then except to save our lives in the hope of winning back fortress and throne? Your Majesty, will you not consult with the Christian mandarins whom I named over to Phue-Lin and at least make an attempt to nip this plot in the bud?"

"Can I depend upon the loyalty of the

Christians, when men like these who are not traitors to our religion waver? My councillors are of the opinion that I cannot."

"Your councillors know not the Christian religion and its strict commands to give to the king what is his due, and to God His due. You can depend upon the loyalty of your Christian subjects. I will pledge my life for them."

The Emperor put the matter to his advisors whose numbers had dwindled away. Phue-Lin agreed with the page; the others spoke bitterly against the plan. Then a Mandarin of the Guard rushed into the room calling out: "A courier! The French are coming!"

The messenger entered and announced that a strong fleet of many great ships was lying at the mouth of the river, and that the commander demanded a free entrance to and surrender of the fortress. Scarcely were these words out of his mouth before there came the thundering of cannon from the east.

Everybody rushed to the windows and listened.

"What is to be done now?" cried the

young Emperor, pale with fear. "We have the choice between the Black Flag and the French, and the leader of the followers of the Black Flag has taken his oath to kill me."

"Make common cause with the French," said Phue-Lin. "Their coming is our salvation for the time being. Listen to their demands, and look out for your own safety. Place Ngo-Bin in charge of the palace guard, and man the walls with the other soldiers."

The Emperor agreed to act upon this advice. In the meantime the cannonading came nearer, and over the fortress there rolled clouds of smoke. At the River Gate which one of the Christian mandarins had manned quickly was a crowd of Annamites, who had fled in small boats, and with them came armed followers of the Black Flag demanding admission. Within the fortress fighting was going on, for the prisoners in the East Tower taking the cannonading as a signal for carrying out their part of the plot, attempted to gain possession of the gate to the inner fortress. Outside a crowd of soldiers demanded that Hiep-Hoa, who

had fled with the women into the inner court and was in the depths of despair, should be given over to them. When this was told him he said:

"Our only salvation lies in giving the fortress over to the French, but who is there to carry this message to the mandarin at the River Gate?"

"I'll try with God's help," said little Frank Thuan and started immediately on his dangerous errand.

CHAPTER XI.

The Surrender.

Through gardens, over walls and fences little Frank hurried with the Emperor's commands to the keeper of the River Gate. In the broad avenues of the park were groups of soldiers and officers, the former rushing towards the palace, the latter to the walls. Great confusion reigned within the palace, but still greater without the gates and on the river where the cannonading was going on. Frank was stopped a number of times by bystanders, but got away and made all the haste he could.

"If only Ngo-Bin can hold out for a half hour," he said to himself, as he stopped to catch his breath. "I must take a round-about way, as there is such pounding on the nearest gate that I shall not be able to get out that way."

He took a path diagonally across the park to one of the canals, jumped into a small pleasure boat and rowed himself as fast as

he could to the place where this canal passed under an archway to join the moat and the river on beyond the outer wall. The archway on the outer wall was always closed by a strong iron grating, but that of the inner wall was usually open. Frank hoped that that would be the case this time, but when he reached the place he found that it was closed. He hesitated only for a moment, took off his cloak, then climbing the grating and squeezing through the little opening at the top, jumped into the canal and swam to the bank. Still he was a good half hour's run from the gate. With dripping clothes on he hastened. Hardly had he gone a hundred steps when he met a crowd of drunken men, among whom were the robbers who had been imprisoned with him in the dungeon of the West Tower. The followers of the Black Flag had released them, and immediately on regaining their freedom they had gone to a nearby wine room for saki. Now intoxicated and ready for anything in the way of robbing and plundering they were wandering about the park. In fright the boy stopped as near to the wall as he could, hoping they would

go by without noticing him, but they did not. Hardly did the ringleader get a glimpse of the page before he drew his sword, struck and wounded him. A second robber who had not drunk so much wine as the others threw himself between the two and received a second blow meant for Frank. "Devil, you are murdering an angel," he cried.

Without giving heed to his words the man went on followed by his companions.

"Poor child!" said the young robber, wiping the blood from the wound on Frank's forehead, "I fear you will soon go to that God of love the story of whom made such an impression on me. Open your eyes. Do you not know me, Thuan?"

"Yes, Li, an angel has sent you to me. Carry me quick as the wind to the River Gate. There I must deliver a message on which the life of the Emperor depends."

"Let the Emperor . . . I'll save your life, if possible," he replied, tearing a piece of cloth from his cloak with which to bind Frank's wound. However, as the boy begged him so earnestly to take him to the River Gate, he picked him up, and placing him on his right arm—for blood was drip-

ping from the two wounds which he had received on the left arm—he ran as fast as he could with him.

He reached there just in the nick of time. With utmost difficulty the Christian mandarin Min-Nam had succeeded in defending the gate from the followers of the Black Flag without and within. Now it was secure for a few moments at least, as those without had fled at the approach of the French war vessel, and those within were busy in the palace. Min-Nam was determined to die at his post rather than admit the French, to prove that Christian soldiers were not traitors to the cause they supported.

“We will fight just as bravely against these foreigners as we would against rebels, though they are Christians,” he said, and hurried to the wall to direct the gunners to fire off the miserable old guns. The command to surrender he answered with a shot which made no impression on the iron sides of the vessel, while the bombshells of their enemies tore great holes in the walls, and the flying stones sent the Annamites running in every direction. In their terror the gunners wished

to flee, but Min-Nam would not allow them to do so. Blocking the way, with a drawn sword, he called out: "Whosoever attempts to leave his post and flee, I will cut down with this sword. When I flee, then it will be time for the rest of you to go. Take courage. Even if our cannon balls make no impression on the iron sides of the vessels, fire them at the Frenchmen when they attempt to land. Do what you can to prevent their getting to the gate."

While shell after shell rained on the walls and man after man fell, from the bulwark which protected the gate in person Min-Nam directed the gunners: "They shall not enter so long as powder and iron are left."

Min-Nam was determined not to let the French in, and while he was keeping them at bay had no idea that the palace was being ransacked and the Emperor's life threatened, until Frank Thuan came, borne on the arm of the robber. A soldier announced to the officer that a messenger who was badly wounded had arrived, bringing orders from the Emperor. He rushed down stairs, and there found the page almost senseless. Recognizing him he called him

by name. This roused him sufficiently to speak, and he said: "Thank God, it is Min-Nam. The Emperor commands you to surrender to the French. Here is his ring as a pledge for the truth of what I tell you."

The mandarin was utterly astonished. After a moment he recovered himself and said: "Take your orders to the next gate where there is a heathen mandarin. I do not want to have it said that a Christian officer opened the gate to the enemy."

"But the Emperor commands it. I do not think I can possibly get to the next gate alive; even now the rebels are sacking the palace. A Christian soldier shows his fidelity by obeying orders quite as much as by dying. Think of Christ's submissiveness and the ignominy of His crucifixion for our redemption."

The mandarin could scarcely keep back the tears as he said: "God's will be done. Take the wounded boy into the watch-room and get ready to open the door!" With these words he ran up the stairs and signalled the surrender with a white flag. Immediately the boat stopped the can-

nonading and marines began landing.— While the gate was being opened Min-Nam dispatched the greater part of his troops to the palace to attack the rebels in the rear. They found the gate of the inner fortress which lay between them and the palace deserted, for the first shots of the enemy which tore the walls caused every Annamite to disappear. Min-Nam received the French officer who had demanded the surrender of the fortress. Through an interpreter he told him that the Emperor had ordered the opening of the gate and was that moment in dire straits. The Frenchman said that his commands were to protect the Emperor, and with the aid of the loyal Annamite troops put down the rebellion.

After the surrender of the tower the French soldiers, led by Min-Nam and his troops, hurried to the palace, where they arrived just as the rebels who had discovered a side entrance were forcing their way in with cries of victory. A number of French slaves who brought up the rear turned this cry to one of awful wailing, and in a moment of utter confusion the followers of the Black Flag turned and fled.

When Phue-Lin took the news to the Emperor, who, pale with fear, was momentarily waiting his death call, he answered: "I can thank the Christians for this, and shall appoint Ngo-Bin Minister of War."

"He is dead. He fell fighting the rebels on the palace stairs; and the page who carried the message to the River Gate is badly wounded and is lying in the watch-room of the Tower."

"Bring him here," cried Hiep-Hoa, "I will nurse him like a brother."

CHAPTER XII.

The End.

With little trouble Admiral Courbet carried the entrenchments at the entrance to the River Hue. Over a thousand Annamites fell, and had it not been for internal dissensions, Hiep-Hoa would have been forced to surrender fortress and city as soon as the French began their bombardment. As it was he had to yield to all their demands. First came the formal recognition of a protectorate and the pledge of faith—the manning of the fortress with French soldiers. The Annamite troops, with the exception of the Emperor's body guard, now officered by the Christian Min-Nam, had to give way to French riflemen. Tried officers of skill strengthened the walls and fortified them with the best of new guns. The Emperor, in spite of the deference shown him by the foreigners, was a prisoner, forced to follow out the commands of his captors, though for the time being at least in possession

of a throne. After all the negotiations had been gone through with, on the 25th of August 1883 the final agreement was signed and the French protectorate over Annam established.

The day was observed with a great military celebration. The troops in brilliant uniforms were drawn up before the palace. In front stood the body guard in two lines, with a richly caparisoned elephant between these lines; behind them, arranged around an open square and on either side of a bridge, were the French riflemen, their bayonets glittering in the sun. On the top of the stairs leading to the palace, and covered over with a handsome baldachin, stood the throne. Upon it sat the young Emperor, shaded by four enormous silk umbrellas and surrounded by all his court dignitaries. His pale face betrayed his feelings, his sadness of heart. The French generals, accompanied by a corps of officers, came up the steps; a civil officer read the compact which made Annam tributary to the French government, the Emperor a vassal of the French; an interpreter explained it in the language of the Annamites, and the Emperor signed it. 9

"This is perhaps my death warrant," he said half aloud, "for my mandarins will never forgive me for giving up the independence of Annam as the price of my throne."

Beside the white flag of Annam was raised the tri-color of France; the drums began to beat, and the troops called out: "Long live France! Long live Hiep-Hoa, who shall under the protection of France bring peace and harmony to this country." From the walls thundered the cannons, announcing to the city and the people round about the change which had taken place.

On the evening of this day Father Hoang was walking with a young French physician of the garrison through one of the broad avenues leading to the wing of the palace in which the Emperor had his private apartments, those described in the first chapter.

"You must be very happy, my revered Father, to think that your fellow Christians are under the protection of a Christian power; now your religion will spread very quickly, and in a few years Annam will be a Christian kingdom."

"Perhaps it will be as you say," replied the missionary with a sigh, "but I have my doubts. Rather I fear that to-day may be the beginning of new persecutions, which will result in doing away wholly with all the Christians in the land."

"Do you doubt Hiep-Hoa's sincerity?"

"The Emperor has no power in his own kingdom, since in the eyes of his people he is little more than a puppet of the hated—excuse the word—the deadly hated foreigner."

"Our weapons, our victorious troops will give him all the support he needs and protect all Christians."

"Certainly you will protect the missionary communities here in Hue and in the fortified places in Tonkin, but how about the half million people in the interior who are under mandarins, nearly all of whom are in league with the followers of the Black Flag? You surely cannot protect the whole land with armed troops. And what is to happen if you give up your power as you did ten years ago in Tonkin? Then upon the occasion of your withdrawal eighty Christian villages were consumed by fire, and the blood of ten

thousand Christians stained the earth. The spread of Christianity and the matter of persecution of Christians in Farther India are quite different things from what they are in France. Here they are not a matter of politics and money. As soon as the powers in Paris may see fit to act, to withdraw the forces again—why we Christians will be offered up as a sacrifice.”

The young physician made no reply, and for a time the two men walked along through the park in silence. When a wing of the palace appeared in view Father Hoang went on to say: “My friend, I do not wish you to be angry with me for speaking so plainly and with such bitterness against the political policy of France, but my heart bleeds. Without this sad mixing up of the French in the affairs of my country the missions in Annam would to-day be in a flourishing condition in spite of the Emperor’s persecutions. Now their progress will be hindered for at least ten years, and I would be utterly in despair about the work, were there not consolatory arguments other than the French protectorate to be found.”

“And in what do you find these other consolatory arguments?”

“In the virtue and the heroic courage of the Christians in this land which has run red with the blood of martyrs. The boy that we are going to see, and whose story I told you, is in my eyes a pledge of future victory.”

The two men were admitted to the palace and taken to a large and beautiful room, in which for more than three weeks our little friend Frank had been confined by illness. The Emperor had given orders that he should be kept very near to him and cared for by the best physicians, both Annamite and French. Here he had been lying for weeks suffering from brain fever. His mother, who was so ill that she could hardly get about after her experience in the dungeon, kept close watch at his bedside, though he did not know her. In his delirium he preached the Christian religion, and for hours at a time Phue Lin and his grand-nephew, and even the Emperor himself, sat in an adjoining room and listened to what he said. Now it was an explanation of the catechism; now prayers to the guardian angels and the Blessed Virgin; now a fervent outpouring of love for the crucified

Saviour. Again and again in his ravings he fancied himself before the great Judge; then he repeated his creed and offered to sacrifice his life for his belief. On another occasion he prayed to little Dominicus Thuan, held his crucifix high above his head, and said that he saw his own crown of eternal life beckoning him to come and take it. Those within hearing could not keep back the tears. Phue-Lin said the ravings of this boy had told him more of Christianity than all the teachers and books which he had consulted, and he not only gave permission to have little Lhu prepared for baptism, but he himself agreed to make ready. And still another, the robber Li, whom the page converted in the prison and who now was in Phue-Lin's service, asked for instruction.

Then there came a day when Frank was in his right mind, though very weak and tired. His mother tried to comfort him by saying that he would soon be up again, that his wound would heal, and that he would quickly regain his strength, but he only shook his head and smilingly answered: "No, mother, the crown is beckoning to me; I must go, and you will follow soon."

The mother wept, for the boy's mind was wandering again, though his eyes were clear and his face had its natural expression.

"As God wills, Frank," she said, "if your heavenly crown is prepared and waiting for you, I do not wish to stand for an hour even between you and eternal happiness."

The boy closed his eyes, then after a few moments asked if Father Hoang had called. This priest had been for a long time his father confessor, the one to whom he had confided with utmost contrition all his lapses, his stumblings in the paths of virtue. And he asked the priest, if he considered him ready, if he would not allow him to receive first holy communion as a viaticum. Willingly the priest granted this request and promised to return that evening to pray with him, for he knew it would comfort him. Then he told him that Phue-Lin, Lhu and Li had all begun to prepare for baptism. The boy's face brightened and he expressed a desire to see them. After a time they came into the room. Stretching out his hand towards them with a smile, he wished them joy for deciding to follow the call of grace. Turning to Lhu

he said: "You see the Queen of Heaven has called you and your grand-uncle—a thing for which you hardly dared hope. Hold her picture in greatest esteem. When both my mother and I are gone, little Dominicus' crucifix shall be yours. I know you will treasure it, for it comes down from the days of the bloody persecution of Christians here in Annam."

He took the crucifix, and kissing it gave it first to his mother and then to Lhu to kiss. All wept. Father Hoang who was present asked Frank, if he would like to have the three who were under instructions baptized there in the room.

A look of utmost joy passed over his face, as he said: "Yes, and let it be done soon; then I shall die happy."

It was decided to have the baptism that evening, and to let the French doctor who had been in constant attendance upon the boy act as sponsor at the ceremony. Just as the sun was going down all assembled in the sick room. There, opposite the bed, a small altar was arranged, and on it placed the picture of the Blessed Virgin before which Lhu had so often prayed. From the midst

of flowers and candles the Queen of Heaven looked lovingly down on the three catechumen dressed in white, who knelt at her feet. At the sides of this altar stood a costly basin filled with holy water, and near by silver vials with consecrated salt and oil. To the three the sick boy gave baptismal names. The old man he called Simeon, the robber Dismas after the good robber in the story, and his small friend Dominicus after the martyr whom he held in such esteem. Then Father Hoang spoke a few words to the neophytes and began the ceremony. With clear voices they renounced the devil and all his works; they were signed with the sign of the cross they were to bear, and anointed; they announced their belief in the Holy Trinity and repeated together the Apostles' creed, then the baptismal water was poured over their heads — a mystical washing away of sin through which they were born again of the Holy Ghost. As children of God they embraced one another and those present.

The physician, who had not practised his religion for years, was deeply moved and left the sick room firmly resolved

to make his peace with God, the which he did on the very next day. And still another was touched by this ceremony which he witnessed from the adjoining room, the Emperor Hiep-Hoa. For a long time the weak Prince wavered; he was undecided as to whether to accept the call of grace. The desire for the throne, yes, for his life which he believed would be imperiled if he accepted Christianity, terrified him, and, like all cowards in the face of duty, he put off taking the decisive step until some future time. He could not refrain from seeing the boy once more whose heroic example had made such an impression on him, and the following night he slipped in to his bedside. The mother, surprised to see him, moved back and gave him a place close to the slumbering boy. For a long time he sat looking at the pale face, on which there was a faint smile. When the boy wakened he wished to absent himself, but as Frank recognized him he staid for a few friendly words. In answer to them the boy replied: "With the eternal crown which Christ, my Lord and Saviour, has prepared for each one who believes in and serves Him He beckons

me." Then more earnestly he added: "Oh Prince, listen to His call, so that you will not lose the heavenly as well as the earthly crown."

These words affected the Emperor.—Stammering something that could not be understood in the way of an excuse he went out of the room quickly. The sick child looked after him sadly and said to his mother: "Poor man, of what account will the crown of Annam be, if he loses his heavenly crown?"

The rest of the night passed quietly. Early in the morning the mother wakened him, as he wished her to do, to pray with him. Soon Father Hoang came in with the consecrated host, followed by the three men who had just been baptized. With quiet devotion the sick boy received the viaticum, after which he did not speak again. He seemed to be wholly occupied with a noble company of heavenly guests, with whom he was holding communion. Three days later he fell into his last sleep without any visible death struggle.

In the garden near the father Mrs. Thuan buried her son, and a year and a day after

this she, too, was called to her heavenly home. Only a simple cross marks the spot where the three lay, nothing that compares with the costly mausoleum over the last resting place of the Emperor Tue-Dueck. Those who rested under the simple mound wear the heavenly crown; of the Emperor it can only be said, "He has worn his crown."

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Here we are at the end of our story, with but time to tell of the fate of the different persons whose histories we have had in these pages. The most of those implicated in the plot, among whom was the Mandarin of War, fled to the interior on the surrender of the fortress and joined forces with the followers of the Black Flag in a struggle against the Emperor and the Christians. Prince Dueck-Dueck disappeared, later he fell into the hands of the French and atoned with his life for all his outrages on the Christians.

Min-Ghe, the jailer, survived his dungeon experience, but came out insane. Imagining himself to be the Emperor of Annam, he made himself a paper crown which he

wore until one day in a fit of intoxication he fell into the river and was drowned. Hiep-Hoa, who could never arrive at any conclusion about anything, finally sought happiness in dissipation, and on the 28th of November 1883 drank a cup of poison handed him by his mandarins. The throne went to a fifteen year old boy, Prince Kien Phuek. But even this did not appease the Annamite party, who could not forgive Hiep-Hoa for the French protectorate. About two years after this there was a general rebellion in which hundreds of Christian villages were consumed in flames, yet in spite of this Christianity flourishes in Annam.



